



Finally Organized!

The Secrets Professional
Organizers Don't Even Know

**How to Get Organized in Four
Weeks and Like It!**

by Kathy Roberts

The Tidy Tutor

© Finally Organized
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Acknowledgments

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And Paula, for saving me from literary embarrassment. You fixed my blunders and kept my voice. You were diligent in helping me for very little in return. You are a true friend, professional, and a wonderful human being.

How to Use This Book

If you have purchased Finally Organized as an e-book, you will notice that there are links located throughout the text. Each link will take you to a video containing additional help regarding that particular section's instruction.

In "Session Three – Week Three" we build a loose-leaf binder together. You may also **purchase one** that is already put together for you on my website. If you choose this option, I recommend that you make your purchase now so that when Week Three arrives you will be prepared to proceed.

There are four sessions offered to bring you from disorder to order. It runs just like you were taking a night course or an adult school course. I strongly urge you to utilize the links in this book. Each session builds upon the next, so don't, jump to the end and think that you will get the results I promise by skipping session 1-3. Give yourself the full week to practice each level and implement what is in each session.

There are some sections of this book that are better seen demonstrated than solely following along in written form. For example: Teaching someone how to organize their paper piles can be a bit like telling someone in words how to tie a shoe. Again, in this case, watching the instructional video might prove to be beneficial. By clicking on the links to watch the videos, you will get the most out of your time and effort.

I'm here to help. Feel free to email me. I will respond with any assistance that I can offer. You must work the program for the program to work.

Most of the people that I work with find that they are so deep in dishes and laundry and stuff that they need a coach, I offer such a program.

If you would like to be personal attention through this process that is described in this book FINALLY ORGANIZED! be sure to take the first session of Tidy Tutor University.

Here is a link to Tidy Tutor University. The First session is free, there is no risk in checking it out and great help even if all you do is take session one!

<http://thetidymentor.com/ready-for-change/>

I look forward to seeing you on campus!

Good luck!

Introduction

Hi. My name is Kathy and I'm a slob.

I was not born organized. I didn't realize this fact right away because it never really affected me until I was given my first long-term assignment in school to complete. Pam Young and Peggy Jones author of Sidetracked Home Executives (the book that started me on my journey to order) says that slob stands for something. It is an acronym for Spontaneous, Lighthearted, Optimistic, and Beloved. Reformed or not, slobs encompass these qualities.



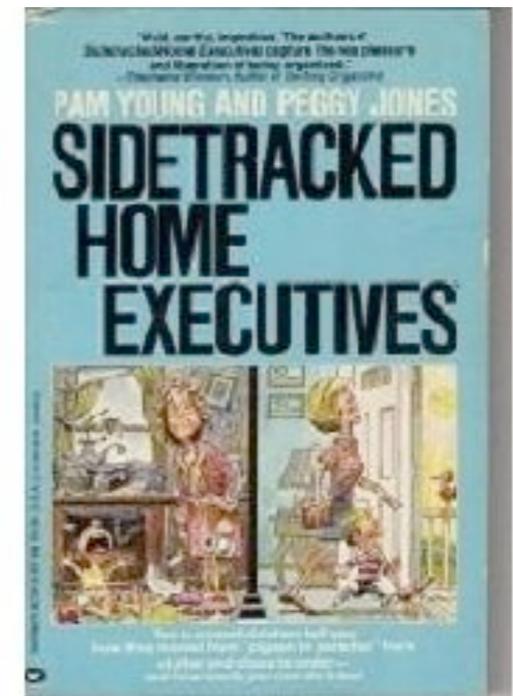
Disorganized people get such a bad rap. Being a messy person makes you just that - messy. Nothing else. Well, it could end up making you depressed, alone, late for everything, overweight, overdrawn, overbooked, overburdened, and appear inhospitable, but it does not make you less than anyone else - not even the June Cleavers or Martha Stewarts, who seem to find pleasure from snickering at our organizational skills... or lack thereof.

We have so many things they (the organizationally gifted type) don't and can't have. For instance, we have the ability to drop everything and do something spontaneous and fun. They can't. They are too scheduled. We can help out a friend in need, even if it is "laundry day." (I think laundry day is hys-

terical, by the way! It isn't like we bring our clothing out to the stream and beat them on rocks! We turn a knob and wait-holy crow!) We are creative and can make something out of nothing. When we realize Halloween is tomorrow, we can improvise the coolest costumes for our children and ourselves. The organizationally-gifted types have trouble thinking outside the box, especially in a moment's notice.

Though these endearing attributes help us get by, they just as often get us into trouble. I thoroughly understand this duality, and that understanding gives the following chapters their greatest value. This book is designed to embrace who you are and how you think, while at the same time giving you what you lack- the ability to finally live organized.

I began my journey to order while running a woman's bible study 23 years ago. At one meeting, I admitted that I couldn't keep house, that I was a wreck at home. Someone mentioned the book Sidetracked Home Executives and I handed the meeting over to her. For the next four weeks she taught from that book. It turned out I was not the only woman who had this problem. Once I spilled



my guts, they were coming out of the woodwork! Women you would have never imagined having organizing issues.

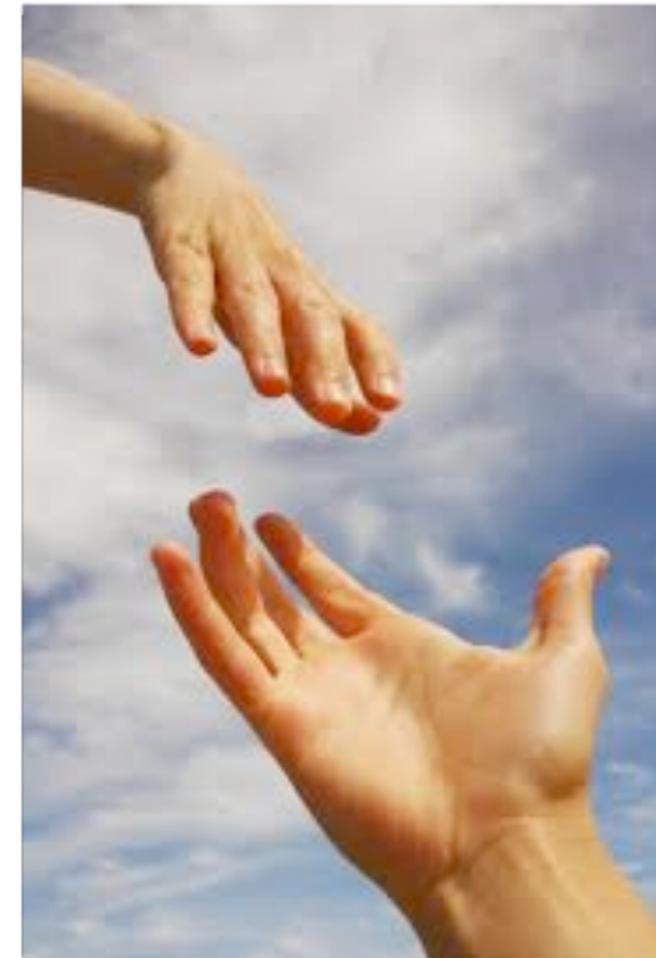
I see people struggle with what I consider an unjust assumption in our society: that everyone is supposed to know how to live organized. In my heart is the desire to pass on wisdom, my observations, and the system that changed my life and so many others. I mention professional organizers in the title of this book because in my live classes I always ask how many people have had a professional organizer come to their home and organize it. Almost always half or more of the attendees raise their hands. Of those who raise their hands, when asked, how many are in the same mess today as they were before their organizers did their job, unequivocally every one of them conceded. Please don't get me wrong. I think that professional organizers are wonderful, and if you are living in a disaster, it is great to have them come and help organize your home to give you a head start. But, if you do not know the method and mentality behind keeping it that way, you will just be throwing your money away. In this book, you will not only know where to start, what to do, and how to do it, but you will be able to keep it that way.



I pray that this book will be for you what Pam and Peggy's book was for me. An oasis, an anchor, a wonderful beginning of living how you always dreamed of living: Finally Organized.

Slobs Anonymous

Your life is in chaos. You hear of a meeting where people like you find help. You decide to check it out. Opening your car, a mess spills at your feet! You feel flushed and touch your cheeks, hoping that the hot feeling is only in your imagination and not illustrated in a bright red color on your face. Your neighbors nod at you with a perceived condescending smile as you bend to pick up the debris.



You reach for the two pens, an empty water bottle, and two-day old mail at your feet, toss it all onto the passenger seat, get into the car, and take a deep breath. Rummaging through your purse, you retrieve mascara and lipstick and apply it using the rear-view mirror while pulling away.



A sense of relief fills your heart as you go, believing this time you will actually clean up your act. You've tried so many things before and somehow have found yourself in even more of a mess. You have heard that people are really being delivered from their disordered lives, so you drive on thinking that this time will be different.

You enter a building next to a church; you continue down a hall and turn. Hesitantly walking through a swinging door you see the room is filled with a variety of people. There are men and women, maybe thirty of them, sitting on folding chairs, which are placed in a large circle. This scene comforts you, suddenly evoking a feeling of fellowship. This problem is not yours alone and perhaps there are others who understand your plight. The feeling you had while driving to the meeting solidifies and you have a resolve: this time, things will be different!

You glance around at each person in the room. You see professionals, older men and women, young people in their 20's,

and some more casually dressed in jeans and T-shirts, as well as women who look like they just came from a PTA meeting. There are men in obvious work clothes, straight from the garage, and you spot a few people in uniforms. All of them are quite together in appearance, including you. You think to yourself: "How can it be that we all are here because we are slob? We cannot keep a house in order, ever open the door to company unannounced, or find a piece of paper or pen when we need it, yet our appearance says such the opposite."

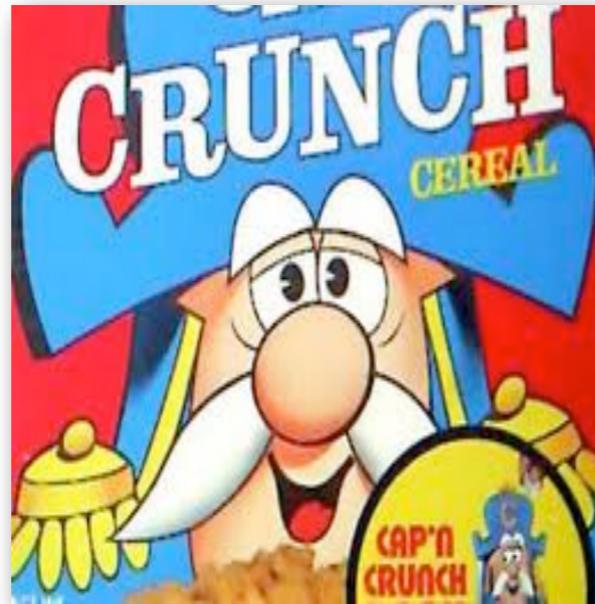
There is a table with pamphlets on it, as well as hard and soft-covered books for loan and for sale. You look around for an empty chair and find one by the window. The facilitator reads an excerpt from a little book that fits in the palm of her hand. It has a message you relate to and you like what you hear. The group leader goes on for a few minutes giving personal examples and testimony, then chooses a topic. The topic chosen? Procrastination.

The leader hands a little hour glass timer to the person sitting to her right and explains that the timer is meant to keep each person aware of how long they are speaking, giving others a chance to speak as well. She instructs that you may turn the hour glass two or three times, then in all good conscience, stop speaking and pass it on.



The first person begins to speak, “Hi, my name is Marge and I am a slob.” The group answers in unison, “Hi Marge.” Marge continues to spill her guts all over the room, “This morning I got up determined to be out of the house on time, but I forgot that I changed shoes in the car yesterday and the ones that I needed for the outfit I was wearing were still out there. It’s no wonder I couldn’t find them—they weren’t even in the house. Of course I didn’t remember until after I had to change what I was wearing, and all of that searching and changing took so much time that I couldn’t have breakfast! OK. So I thought... I’ll just grab a box of whole grain crackers...at least it’s kinda healthy, right? And at least I wouldn’t be all grumpy and hungry ‘til lunch. I wish I knew when I was searching for my shoes that my keys were lost. I could have been killing two birds with one stone! I ask you... How could anyone be on time with that kind of a morning?” She passes the timer on, seeming frustrated, and the next poor slob begins.

“Hi. My name is Julie and I’m a slob.” Then the response; you join in this time, “Hi, Julie!” She begins her mantra, “I remembered last night that I was supposed to bring a snack for the kids’ Sunday school class. I was so tired last night, I convinced myself that I could get up early and do what



I needed in the morning. I did get up early, and I was really proud of myself! I remembered an email that I had to answer and since it was so early I had plenty of time to get that in. So, I turned on the computer and before you know it an hour had gone by... well, I was still OK, believe it or not, so I stopped what I was doing to run to the store, I threw a kerchief on my head and put on a pair of flip flops that I use when I take out the dog. I had left the house without my purse. When I went back for it, of course the door was locked, I had to ring the doorbell to get back in, but no one was waking up! My phone was in my purse so I couldn’t call—it was terrible! By the time someone woke up to let me back in it was too late to go to the store!



I ended up bringing dry cereal for a snack. Thank God I had an unopened box of Cap’n Crunch in the pantry. I knew that the church had little paper cups for the kids, and so, my plan was to pour some cereal in each little Dixie cup. Well,” she pauses, “I was a hero! Everyone loved it and the moms loved the idea I had,” she laughs. “They thought it was intentional—a healthy snack for the morning, like breakfast!” Julie pauses again, and laughs a little to herself. “I had no time to fix myself up, but I managed to look pretty decent. I wore a

hat that matched my outfit; it looked like I wanted to look like I did... kinda funky. Little did they know, under that hat, my hair was dried on the vine!” Laughing, she passes the timer on.

The description of the Slobs Anonymous meeting you just read was fictitious. There are no meetings for the organizationally-challenged. If only there were! What help might lie behind the doors of such an organization?

Our “Ism” and the Slobs 12 Steps

Of course, we can't apply the 12 steps, as they are, in AA. We would have to make new ones, suitable for our special condition. Let's take a look at Alcoholics Anonymous first step:

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.



Unlike those afflicted with alcoholism, we are not powerless over our disorganized nature. Though it may often feel this way, as you continue to read, you will come to realize how much power you actually do have over your disorder. Believe it or not, like learning to ride a bike, becoming organized is a learned process. By slowly uncovering the layers of our “ism” (one bad habit at a time) we reveal that we have all that it takes to be just as organized as those born that way! You may be thinking, “Wait! My sister is so organized and she never had to ‘learn’ anything!” We’ve all known someone who took to something as if they were experts, yet actually had no experience at it. I sat at a piano at four years old and played a song with two hands, chords and all.

We will discuss this further in another chapter, but for now, I just want to get this point across: There are some people who are gifted in the category of order, just as there are those gifted in music, but that does not mean that all are gifted in order, or that all are gifted with musical ability. There are more



of us slobs than there are the organizationally gifted, just as there are more of those who have not been born with natural musical ability than there

are virtuosos. Wherever you think you might lie on the Disorder Continuum, believe it or not, even if you are one of the Martha Stewarts of the world, this system could benefit you.

To fit our needs and purposes, I’ve modified Alcoholic’s Anonymous 12-Step format. Here they are: the 12 Steps for the Organizationally Challenged a.k.a. S.L.O.B.

The 12 Steps for the S.L.O.B.

Step 1 - We admit that we are slobs, and that our lives are unmanageable.

Step 2 - We understand that there are some essential abilities in the human species that need to be learned.

Step 3 - We make a decision to take control of our lives and learn how to be organized.

Step 4 - We make a searching and fearless inventory of our gifts and talents and determine to celebrate each of them.

Step 5 - We admit to ourselves and anyone we come in contact with that there are no excuses for disorder, ever!

Step 6 - We are entirely ready to learn what we need to learn, and also ready to do what is needed to change our habits, homes, and lives.

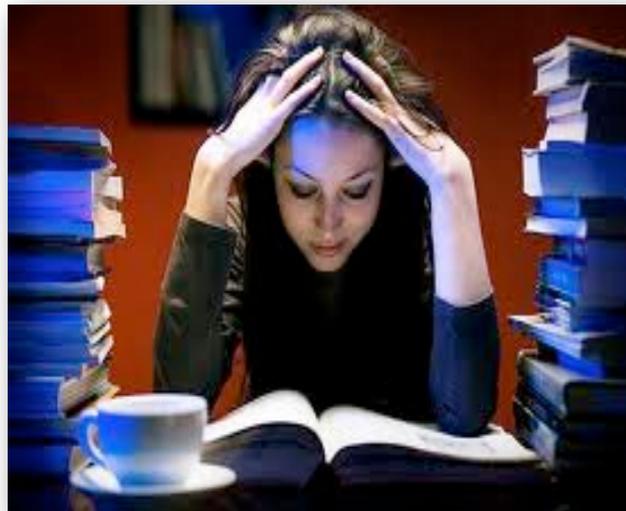
Step 7 - We humbly accept the fact that we are wonderful just as we are, even if we never pick up an article of clothing, or wash a dish; even if nothing changes externally at all.

Step 8 - We make a list of all the things we want to do and places we want to go when we finally have more time because of our new ordered lives.

Step 9 - We make direct amends to ourselves for every negative thing we think of ourselves, because we simply don't know how to do what is innate in others.

Step 10 - We continue to apply what is learned, by remembering the no- excuse rule, and understanding that our nature will always remain the same.

Step 11 - We seek to understand ourselves and give attention to higher callings because of the time found due to our practical application of these steps.



Step 12 - Having a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we carry this message to others, and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Several similar behaviors are shared between those in 12-step programs and

those of us who are disorganized —Denial, Projection of Blame, Justification, and Minimization. To illustrate my point, I ask you to think about any long-term project that was assigned to you as a youth, such as a book report. I know you can remember the horror and dismay of pulling it all together at the last minute. First, there's Denial. "I don't need to start working on this project now! This will be a breeze!" Next, Projection of Blame, Justification: When the due date actually arrives, and you have only made a first attempt at gathering the things you will need to begin, you inevitably must speak to the

teacher with a plethora of excuses for your shortcomings, "I was sick for two days, and I went to the library and all of the books I needed were out. My computer froze and I couldn't get any information!" Your teacher loves you, so he gives you extra time.

Now here comes the Minimization! You work all weekend and get it done! Hand it in on Monday, get an A, (only it is lowered to a B because it was late) and declare to yourself, "Look at all the work everyone else did! I got it done in three days and I got an A!" Sure, you got it done and received a great grade — a testimony to your resiliency and talent, but it was not without great sacrifice. You couldn't enjoy the weekend, you did not sleep much, never left your room, had severe anxiety, and wanted to cry during the entire process.

An assignment that has been given six weeks in advance is given that far in advance for a reason. The reason?

- it takes six weeks to complete it! Now, fast forward to today and put your adult self in a similar situation—a dinner party, for instance, a family vacation, or a holiday that you are hosting. You

can see immediately how nothing has really changed. Each one of these objectives needs a considerable amount of time to pull off (without stress, pressure, and anxiety). Yet, we always



manage, don't we? Using those same coping skills we used as children, we end up no worse for wear and come out smelling like a rose. But not without consequence.

Dumping a six-week project in a child's lap is unfair, without first giving proper instruction as to how to execute the project in steps and stages, and how to schedule such a monumental event. Yet in the world of order, this is how it is done, and has been done, and will continue to be done in our society, and our fellow organizationally challenged counterparts will manage to get by somehow, but at a price! There will always be the occasional slip-through-the-cracks child, who simply cannot, for probable unfortunate issues at home, readjust his disorder to make it work. This is so sad to me. Seen as a troubled child (perhaps they are), they are written off, when all they need is simple instruction. This book, which serves as an instructional manual, will prove to be freedom for you. Freedom to be who you are, with pride, while learning how to go from one step to the next, in life's labyrinth of projects, maneuvers, and celebrations.

It Is What It is

Step 1 – We admitted that we are slobs, and that our lives are unmanageable.

I have found that many who are organizationally challenged and live in a mess are in denial. I was one of them. Sure, I knew that I was a slob, and I felt and experienced all of the disabling effects that a disorganized life brings, but I thought I knew why, and the knowing of the supposed ‘why’ seemed to give me permission to live the way I was living.



None of us can ever embrace the first step if we are in denial, searching for excuses, and desperately seeking why we are how we are. This would ultimately prove to be our demise.

In the scenarios below, you can see how it makes no sense to come up with reasons as to why we may be organizationally challenged or even the reasons why we aren't. You will see that none of these are accurate statements and would never hold up in a court of law.



Scenario Number 1: I grew up in chaos!

The house that I lived in was always a mess. My mother could not get things together. I swore that I would never live that way and that my place and life would always be in order.

Scenario Number 2: I grew up in chaos!

The house that I lived in was always a mess. My mother could not get it together, so it is no wonder why my house is always a wreck. I didn't have a chance! It's all I knew!

Scenario Number 3: I grew up in such perfection.

Life was so ordered and scheduled. My mother was Gestapo! No spontaneity, no room to deviate from the status quo, I swore that I would not live that way. I live as I do because I rebelled so much from that lifestyle that I never stood a

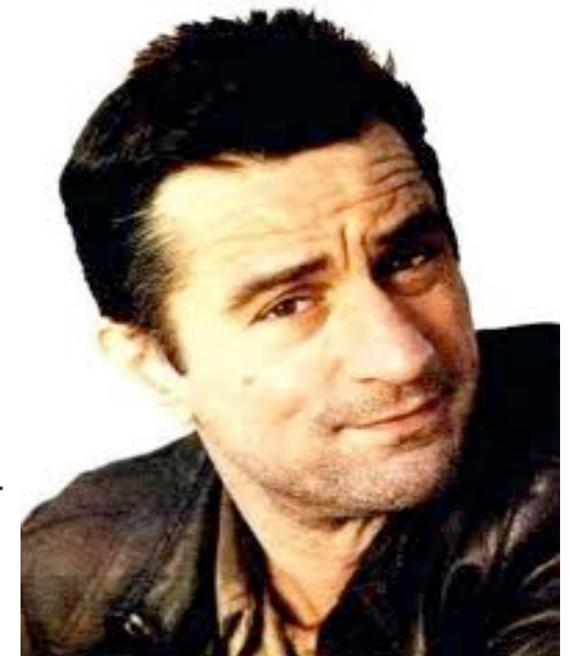
chance. My place is a mess because of that desire to be different, to not raise my kids in that rut of a lifestyle.

Scenario Number 4: I grew up in such perfection.

Life was so ordered and scheduled. My mother was amazing! You always knew how things would be. Our home was always immaculate. I live such an ordered life because of the way I was raised. It is all I know.

It is foolish to figure out why we are organized or not organized. It is not because of how you were raised. You either are or you aren't, based on what is you, based on how you were born. Let your mother off the hook and stop blaming her. She will be so happy that you did, especially if she was as neat as a pin—you both must have been so frustrated trying to understand each other. We all are unique individuals and have diverse gifts and talents that come naturally. Celebrate you, just as you are!

Haven't you ever heard, and perhaps you have said yourself, that you are really organized, you know where everything is, you may be in a mess, but things get done! Or, I am organized, I am just a slob. This is an oxymoron. If we want anything to change in life, remember: The first step is admitting that we have a problem.



I will outline a few characteristics common to slob or the organizationally challenged as I like to refer to them. If you answer “yes” to two or more, um... you’re a slob.

Characteristics Common to Slobs (the organizationally challenged)

1. Cabinet doors and drawers are often left open.
2. You need to search for your keys occasionally or many times.
3. You need to search for your shoes occasionally or many times.
4. You wake up to dishes in the sink.
5. At times, you fall asleep in your clothes.
6. The inside of your car is usually a mess to the point of embarrassment.
7. You cannot have company over without advance notice.
8. You step over (or on top of) things on the floor.
9. There is a chair in the bedroom that cannot be recognized or used as a chair.
10. You don’t shower, groom, or dress unless you have somewhere to go.
11. When you have company, you do not ask for help in the



kitchen, because you will not allow them to open the fridge or cabinets.

12. You hang an “out of order” sign on a bathroom door and lock it when you are having a party because you only cleaned one bathroom.
13. You are a master of substitution.
14. You get take-out often because there is no food in the house.
15. You often need to frantically pay a bill over the phone or online.
16. There are piles of paper in your house including unopened mail.
17. You write numbers and important information on random pieces of paper and end up losing them.
18. Last night’s dinner is sometimes still on the stove when it is time to prepare the next night’s dinner.
19. It is easier to buy a new one rather than find the one you know you have in the house somewhere.
20. You believe that there is a reason (excuse) for all of these issues.

It could be that you are just beginning to realize that many of the things listed above don’t happen to everybody, which was the case with me. When I first began my journey from pigpen to paradise, it was an eye-opening experience. My newly embarked lifestyle gave rise to conversations with friends on the topic of organization. It was then that I found out that they

rarely, if ever, lose their keys, and they always know where their shoes are. You may have answered “yes” to only three of these questions, or perhaps maybe you answered “yes” to most, or all. In any case, you picked up this book for a reason. You are looking for help in the category of living a more organized life.

Most of this book is written for the over-the-top organizationally challenged soul. Your state of affairs do not have to be as severe to justify your dissatisfaction with how your home and life is run, or your desire to have it run more efficiently. If you answered “yes” to many of these questions, then rejoice! You are about to experience the change of a lifetime. And if you answered “yes” to only a few, how wonderful for you to have such a head start. Enjoy celebrating the new-found you!

Session One- Week One

(Practice everything below for one week)

MEMORIZE AND EMPLOY THESE NEW HABITS:

There are 12 habits that you are to remember and implement. Here are four of them. Write down the following list onto a few index cards. Place them in various places so that they will be visible to you throughout the day, for example, on the bathroom and bedroom mirror, on the refrigerator and at work. Think of them occasionally throughout the day.

- 1. Do it now! Not later.**
- 2. Think about tomorrow, today.**
- 3. Get up a half hour earlier than you need.**
- 4. Shower, dress, and groom before anything.**

Do it now!: “I’ll do it later” is a phrase you will not allow yourself to say any longer. There are so many negative events that can be avoided, so many messes that would not occur, and so much time saved by simply doing it now.

Example: You drop your keys as you walk in the door, since your hands are full, you say, “I’ll get them later.” Well, later never comes and you forget about dropping the keys. Later, you proceed to tear your house apart looking for them and in the process suddenly remember about dropping them earlier. In the meantime, you are late, and have probably upset most of the people in your household, all the while destroying your house during your frantic search.

Another example is when you are at the bank. You make your transaction and have your license and debit card in the envelope that was given to you from the teller. You know that you should put the items in your wallet, but instead you say, “I’ll do it later.” After all, there are people behind you, and you are in a hurry. So the envelope ends up either stuffed in your purse, pocket, or on the passenger seat of the car, and later, when you need your driver’s license or debit card it is not where it should be and you find yourself in a cold sweat. Doing it later, NEVER saves you time. Just do it now and you can thank me later!





Think about tomorrow today: Literally, prepare for tomorrow. Get things together, in the evening that you will need to go out with you in the morning. Things that you always take out with you. Including: Shoes, sunglasses, glasses, keys, jacket, iPod, ear buds, and your phone charger. Consider what you have going on tomorrow and get those things together. This way, if you need to make a deposit, cash a check, re-

turn a library book, or go somewhere you have never been, you are prepared, and those things are done before you even wake up.

Put a bag on your doorknob: The organizationally-challenged tend to think they can carry everything in their arms. We end up spilling out the front door and losing something before we get to our cars. Get a nice little bag and hang it on your door knob. If you put an envelope that needs to be mailed in your purse or suit jacket, you most likely will get home



with it still in your purse or jacket. If you have a bag that is specific for today's to-dos, it will get the attention it needs and it also enables you to leave your house with much more dignity and with all items in tact.

Get up a half hour before you normally do: For example, if you get up at 7am and leave at 8am, your wake-up time is now 6:30am. If you work from home, and do not leave the house in the morning, then get up a half hour before you need to begin your day. For example, if you get up at 8am and sit down to work at 8:30am, you will now wake up at 7:30am. If you are a stay-at-home parent, you will need to be ready a half hour before your household wakes up and your day actually begins.

Shower, dress, and groom before you do anything: This is very important! If you have the mindset that there is no reason to be groomed and dressed if you are not going out of the house, this has to change. To some, it is an unusual concept to dress if you are not going anywhere. To others, the organizationally gifted ones, not taking care of one's appearance regardless of what you are doing, is not an option. I know that you like your sleep, but believe me that a half hour of sleep lost will not be noticed except for how lovely it makes your day!

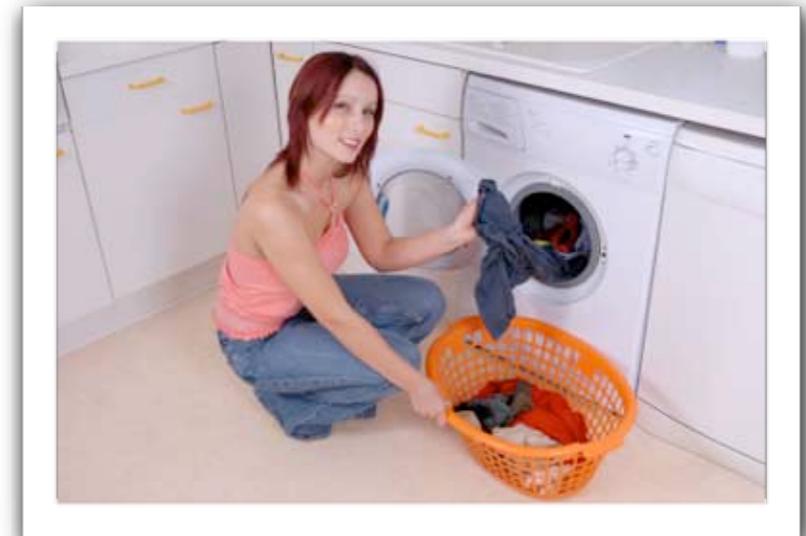
Establish a bedtime: What time is bedtime for you? Most likely, you don't have a specific one. I want you to determine what your bedtime will be, and then shoot to get into bed as close to it as possible, never going more than 30 min-

utes past it. This is important. It establishes an end to your day and gives you a clear view of a time to finish your nighttime routine. You need adequate rest. You deserve predictability and it also gives those in your household a heads up should they need anything from you. Respect your bedtime and those you live with will do the same. Refuse any requests made to you that would not allow you to get to bed on time. Before you know it, they will get with the program and respect your time as you do. Bedtime does not have to mean sleep. It should be used as a time to wind down. Look at your date book, think about tomorrow, read, journal, or whatever you feel you need to do to focus and end your day in peace.



Set aside time to get ready for bed: Wash your face, moisturize, brush your teeth, and put on PJ's, this will be your normal nighttime routine. Clothes go in the hamper if dirty. Put them away if you will wear them again. Actually work in a time to get yourself ready for bed. Think of this as an important part of your day. How often have you fallen asleep in your clothes or brushed your teeth, stripped naked, thrown on a big T-shirt, just before getting into bed? Your clothes end up being left on the floor or thrown on a chair piled on top of other clothes. This is now a thing of the past.

Also, consider what you sleep in. I want you to stop wearing ratty old things to bed. If that is what you do, please, get rid of them. Get yourself pajamas.



You deserve them. Every aspect of you is important—begin acting like it!

You may have heard about the psychological experiment called, “The Power of the Situation”. When Air Force pilots were fully dressed in their uniforms, their performance level was much higher than when dressed in civilian clothes. The importance of being fully engaged and dressed was indisputable. We perform better and are more productive and efficient when we dress for the part.

Check your date book before bed: You may not have or use a date book. If this is the case, you need to get one and use it. You can use your phone if you want, I do, but you should have a backup hard copy. Phones can get lost or damaged. From now on, you will write down everything you say you are going to do, every appointment you make, every future plan, even if it seems like it isn't necessary, even something you think you would never forget to do, or an event that isn't so important. Write down EVERYTHING! Even the

most unimportant things you say you are going to do take time. If you are asked to do something, check your date book before you commit, don't feel guilty to SAY NO to a request, and resist the urge to say yes to something that is an invitation for fun. If you have something scheduled, just SAY NO! You can still do that 'fun' thing, but you will do it at another time. Schedule it! I want you to carry a small notepad with you and write down things that you would normally write on an envelope or scrap piece of paper (that inevitably gets lost).

Keep a steady cycle of Laundry Going: Put a load of clothing in the washer before you go to bed. When you wake up, put that load in the dryer. Be sure to fold before you leave the house. If you go to a Laundromat to do your laundry then you will have to create a specific routine to make sure you do laundry regularly. There is a drop-off service at almost every Laundromat. They will wash, dry, and fold your clothes, priced per pound.

If you wash your own towels, linens, and jeans, your time in the Laundromat will be cut down considerably and the fee will be much less for the drop-off service, since jeans and towels are the heavier items.

Wash dishes on a regular basis: When you are through eating or drinking, wash what was used. DO NOT PUT THINGS IN THE SINK! Before you know it, it will be filled up! DON'T DO IT! Before you sit down to eat, clean up the mess made while preparing what you will be eating. All dishes are to be washed before bed.

If you currently have a pile of dishes to do, take them out of the sink, fill it up with hot sudsy water and put the dishes back in to soak for about 10 minutes. Do those dishes immediately. It takes a lot less time than you think. Hereafter, wash or put dishes in the dishwasher as used. Do them now or do them later, but you know how bad doing them later feels. Just do it!



Create an evening and morning routine: Below you will see a mini-morning and evening routine. Copy what is written below on an index card if you have one, (if not any paper will do) and put it up somewhere in your kitchen, on the fridge, a bulletin board, or tape it to a cabinet door. Put it out where it can be seen, read, and referenced. After they are up, practice these routines daily.

Mini MORNIGN ROUTINE

WAKE UP ON TIME	MAKE BED	CLOTHES IN DRYER
DRINK WATER	SHOWER/GROOM/ DRESS	EAT BREAKFAST
CHECK TO-DO LIST	PUT DISHES AWAY	FOLD LAUNDRY

(If you don't have time to fold it, lay it flat before you leave the house, if you have time, put it away, otherwise, put it away when you get home.)

Mini Evening Routine

CHECK CALENDAR	MAKE TO-DO LIST FOR FOLLOWING DAY	PUT THINGS NEEDED FOR TOMORROW BY DOOR
PREPARE FOR BED (put on pj's, brush teeth, put clothes away or in hamper)	WASH A LOAD OF LAUNDRY	MAKE SURE DISHES ARE DONE
	GO TO BED ON TIME	

Things to get for next week:

1. Timer (you can use your phone, but if you can't use it while you are on it, you will have to purchase a timer)
2. Three boxes (one needs to be an apple box from the produce store)

3. Large plastic garbage bags (tall kitchen bags work best for drop-off to Good Will)

4. Shoe box Pen and 3x5 scratch pad

6. Piggy bank or small jar

(Start collecting produce boxes. You will need about 20 of them. They will be used for storage. Ask at the grocery store or produce store if they will save you apple boxes. They are sturdy and have handles.)

CliffsNotes:

- *Establish a bedtime.
- *Keep dishes washed.
- *Keep laundry going.
- *Shower, groom, and dress before anything.
- *Get up 1/2 hour before you need to.
- *Memorize and practice this week's 4 habits.
- *Practice your morning and evening routines daily.
- *Be sure you have and use your planner.

Society

Step 2 – We came to understand that there are some essential abilities in the human species that need to be learned.

Step 3 – We made a decision to take control of our lives and learn how to be organized.



It doesn't take a genius to know that all people are not good at the same things. We are all aware that everyone has different gifts and talents. Those gifts and talents are what propel us into career choices, marital choices, living arrangements, hobbies, friendships, and the list goes on.

We all have met people who are great with numbers; Math is what turns them on. We have also met people who are musical and mechanical. There are some people who are quite adept at learning languages; it seems second nature for them to acquire a new one. We also know there are people whose organization skills appear so effortless.

Being organized is one of the only abilities that society expects all people to be fluent in. It is no wonder this is expected from us, since order is so necessary to support life. It is the basic framework that the rest of civilization relies upon.

As an objective-thinking species, we often tend to focus on why things are as they are. Of course, if we were looking to change certain behavior, being analytical is sometimes crucial in understanding why we do particular things. However, to wonder why we are disorganized is just as foolish as wondering why we are not fluent in French, when we have never been exposed to it.



Let me illustrate: You always wanted to play the piano, but you are not very musical. You sit down at the piano and find that you can't make a decent sound come from it. You have a dear friend who has been playing since she was four. She seems to just "get it." Sure, she could use a little instruction to improve her skills, but, boy, can she get a nice tune out of that baby, never having taken a lesson.

Spoken in urgency and with drama: "Marge, I don't understand. I want to understand! You know what to do... it comes naturally to you... but when I sit on that piano bench? NOTHING! I mean nothing. My fingers actually can't seem to even play one key at a time! I try to hit one, and I end up pushing two keys down... and there is no harmony... it actually makes whoever's listening want to cringe. WHY! Oh, why, Marge?!"

How ridiculous are those statements? It is ludicrous to spend any time asking why you are not musical, and I introduce to you, that it is as equally ludicrous to ask why you are not organized.

Here we go: "Marge, I don't understand. I want to understand! You know what to do... it comes naturally to you... but when I begin my day, and want to accomplish something in the house? NOTHING. I mean, nothing. My actions actually make more of a mess trying to clean up one! I can't seem to even get started! I begin working on the kitchen, I end up in the attic, and before you know it, I'm sitting in a pile of photo albums reminiscing! I begin to clean a closet, I come across a book, and I begin reading it. The phone rings when I'm in the

middle of it, and I easily accept an invitation to lunch, leaving all the contents of that closet all over the floor. I couldn't walk to the door without stepping on things. Yet, still I say, I'll do it later! I always say I'll do it later! WHY! Oh, why, Marge?!"

Give yourself a break! From now on I want you to see things differently. Why can't you play the piano? Because you haven't learned to yet. Can you learn it, even if you were not born with the natural ability? YES! There are many people who have learned, and are excellent at it, some who actually make a living doing it, some who are famous and are accom-



plished. Why are you not organized? **BECAUSE YOU HAVE NEVER LEARNED HOW TO BE!** Here is a why for ya. Why is it excusable for people to not have been born musical talented or creative but it is not excusable for people to have been born disorganized? We don't even have a word for people who are not musical. Could you image calling someone **UNMUSICAL?! Crazy!** "Oh, Milly! My little Nelly is so unmusical! I don't know what I'm going to do with her!"

We cannot all be the same. It is a universal design. If we were all the same, nothing would get done, nothing would be beautiful (except for nature, of course) no one would receive compassion, nor would there be any advances in science. We need all

kinds of people with all different interests and gifts and talents and personalities to make the world go around. Yet, although we know that to be true, there seems to be a short circuit in the expectation of organization.

I give you permission to love yourself just as you are—all sloppy, maybe reading this book in bed, in a room that looks like a hamper exploded, with an empty pint of Häagen-Dazs next to you with a spoon stuck to it's side, on not so clean sheets, with your dog (or cat) sleeping on the pillow next to you, in a blanket of hair that has accumulated there from all the previous cuddling sessions. Please, celebrate what you have been gifted with. See the lunacy of thinking that you are bad, unmotivated, or lazy, because you are not organized. You are none of those things! You are like lightning! Lots of energy with no direction. This book gives you direction! With direction you know where you are going, and you know how you are going to get there.

Whenever I was asked what I was doing, I would always answer "cleaning up". People would always laugh and say, "Kathy, you say you are always cleaning, but nothing ever gets done. Everything always looks the same." If you are disorganized, you know exactly what I mean. It is the sidetracked gene—I know there must be one! We start one thing and it is not long before we get bored with it, and so we move on to another duty. When working in a particular section of the house, we will return an object that belongs in another room, and while there, it is typical that we become distracted by another "project" and begin working elsewhere abandoning our

earlier undertaking. Each task is something that needs to get done, and so it all seems quite honorable. Yet, since no one thing is finished, since there is no focus, nothing actually ever does get accomplished. Things get started, yes, but never finished. By the end of this book, you will have the skill set needed to turn what seems to have always been a Mission Impossible into a Mission Complete!



S.L.O.B.

Step 4 – We make a searching and fearless inventory of our gifts and talents and celebrate each of them.



It is not an insult to be called a slob when we know what it stands for. S.L.O.B. is an acronym that was coined by Pam Young and Peggy Jones, authors of Sidetracked Home Executives. S is for Spontaneous, L is for our Light-hearted natures, O stands for our Optimism, and B is because we are Beloved by everyone who knows us. Let's look at each of these attributes.

We are spontaneous! We can change plans mid-stream and do things without ever looking at a calendar or checking if there was another plan. We are light-hearted, of course. We have to be, since taking everything with a grain of salt is in our nature. How could we survive the mess otherwise? We are optimistic! Yes, we are, because we think we can get anything done that needs to get done. It is one reason why we volunteer for everything, because we believe that "We can do it!" And the reason we are beloved by everyone is because we always say YES! Somehow it doesn't feel good to turn someone down for a request; after all, we can do it, because we are all of the above!

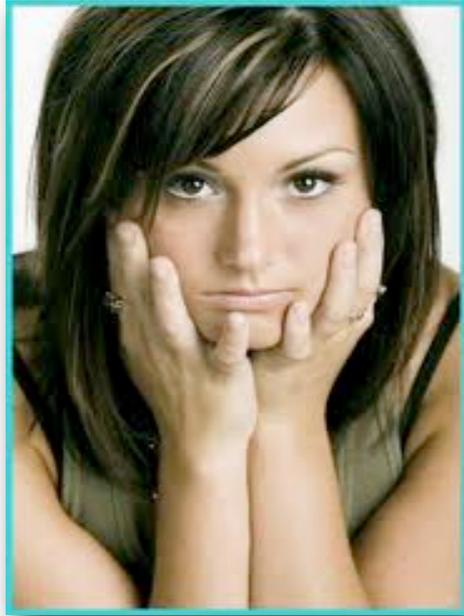
Believe it or not, I don't need to meet you to know what makes you tick. You drop everything to help someone. You overbook, overextend, promise, and don't think until later. You believe that you can do everything, and yet you also think that you couldn't possibly do a particular chore because it will take too long. You are a closet perfectionist. You believe that all things must be done right or not done at all! You have great ideas. You can visualize things happening, a craft project, a home improvement project, a business venture, or an outdoor

garden. You always come through in the end! You also have a vision for society, to help organizations (and you join many—sometimes more than you can fit on your plate), you get very involved, often putting together meetings, parties, celebrations, or fundraisers, and, boy, are you good at it! But you will also wait until the last minute for many things and have to do much of the work yourself. You convince yourself that you work better under pressure and that you would rather get things done yourself anyway. This is a crock and we both know it, but denial is a powerful thing as we discussed in Chapter 3. While you could let these things slide more as a youth than you can as an adult, they catch up with you. You find yourself devastated, cranky, and guilty for the time you spend raising your voice at home, due to the frustrations you have desperately trying to get it all done.

You receive many accolades in all of your endeavors, which is why it is easy to minimize the chaotic and frantic state you find yourself in, time and time again, due to your procrastinating nature. Unfortunately, it is no longer isolated to a possible "F" on a 6-week middle school science project. As adults, we have so many responsibilities and added factors that often have grave consequences attached when neglected. One example are late fees and bad credit, not due to having no money to pay bills on time, but because of



our lack of direction. Because of our nature to see things bigger than they actually are, we become paralyzed in motion, doing nothing until our hand is forced. For those of us who are not organizationally gifted, we know that living this way is devastating. It may be laughable to our organized friends, but to us it is no laughing matter. Regardless of our positive attributes, we know that we must conquer disorder, in order to come from behind the 8-ball and truly be and do what it is that we dream of being and doing.



You appreciate the smallest things and take great honor being asked to play a game, or to be with someone doing just about anything that they ask you to do. In short, if it is not fun, you do not want to do it. As soon as the job becomes mundane, you want out! Beginning is something we do well and we even like to finish. But that middle stuff?! That is torture! Which explains all the halfway done projects lying around the house.

I also know the guilt that often shows up in your heart. You know what needs to be done, but procrastination forces you to go into self-examination. It becomes easy to compare what you want to achieve in your days and in your life with what you actually live. It always seems to fall short of desired objectives, even after so much effort emanates. I understand, truly, I do. You often wonder what is wrong with you. You question

why you are so different from everyone else. You put yourself down. You become paralyzed and sometimes depressed, doing nothing because you become overwhelmed with it all.

I'm letting you know that you are not so different from everyone else. There are many more of "us" than there are of "them", but since it is socially unacceptable to be disorganized, people rarely admit it. Even those who do admit it would never let anyone know the depths that it engulfs their existence. Confessing to being a slob is socially unacceptable, which makes it even more difficult to get help.

I have spoken to women who, in the workplace, and before children, had it all together. They were aware that they could use a



little more order in their lives, but it was not debilitating, nor disconcerting. Life ran easily and effortlessly. When they had a child and took maternity leave, they were floored at how dysfunctional they had become. Without a set routine and schedule, as often is in place at work, in addition to the unpredictability of a baby, they became unable to function productively. Their husbands were amazed at the transformation and became worried. Peggy Jones wrote, "When we said I do, we had no idea how much had to be done."

Again, I am asking you to cut yourself some slack. Taking care of a household is a difficult job. Taking care of a household and a family is even more difficult. If you work outside of the home and have a family, please realize what a monumental task that is. Years ago it was not seen as unusual for a homemaker to have outside help, even though the woman did not have an outside job.

In a scene in the movie *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, Kate (Doris Day) comes home from shopping with her four boys. She is exhausted, throws herself down on a chair, puts her feet up, takes off her lovely little black and white hat and says something like, "I will never take the boys shopping again." All this woman did was go shoe shopping with her children and she was DONE! It wasn't after work! Kate's character was not seen as needy or lazy but as hard-working. AND she had a mother that helped her regularly, AND a housekeeper/nanny that came every day to help her with her children and cleaning.

Listen to me, I don't care what society has tried to cram down our independent suffragette women's liberation throats, being a homemaker is hard and honorable work, and even if you work outside the home, you are still a homemaker. So if you don't have it all together, it is no wonder! Take it easy on yourself, get with this program, if at all possible make it a priority to get outside help. Do the best you can and realize the job that's in front of you is not an easy one. OK?

Are You Talkin' to Me?

Step 5 – We admit to ourselves and anyone we came in contact with that there are no excuses for disorder, ever!

Beware of excuse making!
Excuses make every mess and blunder explainable and justified.



We S.L.O.B.s are so resilient, creative, and adaptable that we manage quite well in disorder. We don't like it, and it is a true detriment when it comes to fulfilling dreams and doing things that we truly want to do, but still, we manage. But with every excuse as to why things are as they are for us, there lies a dead end in actually getting anything done. Those excuses keep us in a perpetual stagnant state.

The no excuse rule is this: There is no excuse.



You are not permitted to use one or say one. For example: I have twins, I have a headache, I have cramps, I am working nights, I have too many kids, the house is too small, the house is too big, I don't have enough closets, no one helps me, I work too much, I'm never home, I had a car accident and am cripple... Whoa, whoa, hang on! you might be saying now. Please indulge me. I mean no disrespect to anyone who is going through the recovery of an accident. But I am telling you that it is not an excuse for a messy house.

Here is one real life example: When I was 28 years old I was in a horrific car accident. I had been working the 12 Steps for the S.L.O.B. full force for about 2 years. We had just moved into a new home in Pennsylvania. I had four children, 9, 7, 5 and 15 months. In a split second everything in my life changed. I was in a collision with a Mac truck pulling a heavy

load and I broke almost every bone in my body. Only my neck, back, right arm, and right hand was not broken. I was in the hospital for four weeks, in a hospital bed at home for another four weeks, and in a wheel chair for a year. When the time came and I was able to, inside the house I got around on my butt, moved along by my arms. Let me tell you, not only did I have nothing to be embarrassed about when people had to come to my house to help with my children, but my home was run as smooth as clockwork, making it easy for everyone



involved to chip in and help. The kids had their routines, their clothing was easily accessible, and all things could be found easily when needed. What could have been an even more devastating experience for my then husband and my little ones was made easier by the fact that, at home, there was peace and order. After I was released from the

hospital four weeks later, and during recovery, while hobbling around and in a wheel chair, my house remained orderly and organized. I was skilled and educated in an area that was not first nature to me- organization- and I put my children on the same system. Bad habits are what make a mess, not circumstances.

Years ago, there was a church member who had cancer. She was a-at-home mom of two little girls, ages five and seven. Her husband worked full-time and went to school at night and

they had an invalid mother living with them. At this stage of the disease, she was completely bedridden. I wanted to do something to help her, so I decided to clean her house. I knew that she was unable to clean, so I could only imagine the amount of work that needed to be done, given how long she had been bedridden. I thought about what I would see when I got there: soda cans, glasses half full with sticky liquid on family room tables. I expected to see last night's dinner still out along with the dishes in the sink. I envisioned full garbage bags lined up in the kitchen waiting to be taken out, and clothes all over the bedrooms and bathrooms. I was prepared with a shovel. Let me tell you what I actually found: a floor that needed vacuuming, furniture that needed dusting, a bathtub that needed some scouring, toothpaste to be Windexed off the bathroom mirror, and the cabinet doors in the kitchen could have used a going-over. It would have been a good thing to move appliances and clean under them too. Other than that, the house was neat and tidy.

OK, now you can say, wait a minute, this wonderful (God bless her) afflicted woman could have had some family over preparing for you, or at her direction, her children or husband may have picked up. Maybe someone else went there to help out often, as well. Of course it may be true, I

Bad Habits To Stop And Good Habits To Adopt



never asked, but my experience with family members who have gone through the same critical problems in life, cancer, was the same. My mother, for example, died at 45, with 8 children living at home and a husband, my father, who went to work at 4am in New York City every day. Her children ranged in ages from 4 -18 when she first got sick. I'll tell you, until the day she died, you could see your face in the hardwood floors. Good habits and the ability of know-how made that possible. There are many other examples of homes that needed no excuse-making when people entered, even when debilitating sickness was the case. There are no excuses for disorder, there are just bad habits to conquer.

Houses are clear of clutter and debris because of good habits that are in place. Things that need to be done in homes where someone is sick are things that require elbow grease. The home stays orderly because, when someone drops something, they pick it up. When they eat food, they clean their dishes. When they take off a piece of clothing, they put it in the hamper. When the hamper gets full, they wash a load of laundry. When clothes are folded, they put them away. When something breaks they throw it out. When a pair of pantyhose is opened, the plastic and cardboard goes in the recycle bins, not on the dresser. It really is that simple to keep a house out of a chaotic state, even in the worst of circumstances, which you will discover.

Now, if you are in a mess *and then* a disaster strikes as I described in my case where I became hospitalized due to a car accident, you would experience a completely different scenario.

If you find order before a life altering incident occurs, than you will at least have one thing to be thankful for as those negative circumstances begin to manifest in your life that are attached to whatever even has occurred.

But what happens if you have not found order yet? What if you are in that situation right now? What do you do? How do you get out of the mess when you are crippled or sick?

I call that “Building your house in the rain.” It can be done, but it ain’t gonna be easy. Please focus on the group of words “IT CAN BE DONE!” I’m telling you, it will be done, with my help, I promise.

(This is one reason why I sincerely encourage you to take preventative measures and begin today. Not that we are anticipating tragedy, of course not. If nothing ever happens, being organized and living in a tidy and orderly home will certainly be a blessing in any case. Living in an orderly home, should any kind of life event occur, is not only a blessing, but often life-saving, money saving, marriage-saving, and family-saving)

I have a specific plan of action to build your house in the rain. it is much like what I have outlined in this book, but there are several components included that will get the job done when you yourself are ill-equipped to get the job done.

If you are in that place, email me, put inside the subject box “Building my house in the rain” and I will get back to you with your solution.

Session Two - Week Two

(Practice everything below for one week)

(CONTINUE TO PRACTICE EVERYTHING FROM WEEK ONE AND ADD WHAT IS SUGGESTED BELOW FOR THIS WEEK.)

HERE ARE OUR FIRST FOUR HABITS FROM “SESSION ONE, WEEK ONE”

1. DO IT NOW! NOT LATER.
2. THINK ABOUT TOMORROW TODAY.
3. GET UP ½ HOUR BEFORE YOU NEED TO.
4. SHOWER, DRESS, AND GROOM BEFORE ANYTHING.

HERE ARE FOUR NEW HABITS TO MEMORIZE.

5. SAY NO!
6. WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN.
7. CLOSE CABINETS, CUPBOARDS, AND DRAWERS.
8. IF IT LEAVES YOUR HAND, IT GOES WHERE IT GOES.

WRITE THESE DOWN ON THE INDEX CARDS WHERE YOU WROTE THE FIRST FOUR.

Say No! We tend to say yes to everything! An organized person says, “I must check my calendar. I’ll let you know after I see what I have going on.” We may not want to be *exactly* like those organizationally gifted people, but we still can learn a lot from them. If you have already gone grocery shopping for the week, and someone asks you to do something that requires a ride to the store, SAY NO! You already went to the store, so making a special extra trip is not in your schedule. That person will either have to go themselves, or get someone else to go. We want everyone to like us, and so we say yes to everything! It is usually to our and/or our family’s detriment. Practice saying NO! OK?



Even if the request seems noble, like driving someone to the hospital, if you can’t, you can’t. Give someone else a chance to give. It is OK to think about yourself and your family. It is the correct order of things.

Write everything down. Write everything down. No matter what you say you are going to do, no matter how insignificant or important it is (sometimes we don’t write things down because we think they are too important to forget), you must write everything down! And...DON’T JUST PUT IT IN YOUR PHONE!

Always have a planner by your computer, this is where we make many of our commitments and appointments. Transfer what you write into your phone, so that when you are out you have the info with you. Also carry a small checkbook-type planner or a 3x5 scratch pad. Write in it when you make a date for something, and include details. There is nothing more frustrating than finding a note to yourself like this: "January 14, Jerry S." OMG! Where? What time? Who the heck is Jerry S?

When you do your before bed routine, transcribe everything from your purse planner into the planner you keep at your computer.

Close cabinets, cupboards, and drawers: We leave these open unconsciously because we have this warped sense of time. We think we don't have any. We are always rushing and even something as rudimentary as closing a drawer seems as if we don't have time to do it. Use your cognitive mind here. Think! Not closing drawers does not save us time they cost us time.

If it leaves your hand, it goes where it goes! The wrapper that should be placed in the garbage can easily be placed there. Instead, it is placed on the dresser which eventually becomes a pile of garbage. The time we take cleaning it up, or stashing it because company is coming, NEVER saves us time. It takes time. Habit #1, "Do it now," comes in handy here. So, if it leaves your hand, put it where it belongs.

FOCUS FOR THE WEEK

Category's to plug in to your week

Free Day
Desk Day
Once Over Day
Loose End Day
Errand Day
Family Work Day
Family Day

We are going to designate specific tasks for each day of the week, we call this our weekly plan. You can see focus categories for each day in the table on the opposite page. You must decide which day of the week you will designate for each focus.

Write down in list form Sunday to Saturday, then write down which day from the list you will deem for which purpose.

Below is an example of my weekly plan. Notice that I have more than one Desk Day and more than one errand day. Tailor this to your lifestyle and schedule. Write on an index card Sunday to Saturday and next to it the focus you have chosen for that day, just as I have done. Post this index card in the same area that you have your morning and evening routines. You will reference this as to what has to get done on what day,

also, you will use this when making commitments or appointments. (Remember to SAY NO!)

My Weekly Plan

SUNDAY	FAMILY/REST
Monday	Free Day
Tuesday	Desk day
Wednesday	Once Over Day/Desk Day
Thursday	Loose End Day
Friday	Errand Day
Saturday	Family Work day/Errand

Family Day: It is a day that you devote to family, a day that is planned for them. And also time to rest.

Free Day: It is a day that is free from work, you do what you want. (In the first four weeks though, you probably should indulge in a Free “Half” Day.)

Desk Day: This is a day devoted to paperwork and office type stuff. Mail, bills, letters, phone calls that need to be made, and



clearing/cleaning up your desk/office area.

Once Over Day: *This is not a day to do any detail cleaning.* Get yourself a glass cleaner, newspaper, or paper towels, and a rag sprayed with some kind of wood polish. Go around the house starting at your front door and think, “The pastor is coming over right now!” Just hit the smudges on mirrors and doors, eye level wood work, and light switches. Then floors: vacuum, sweep and wash the kitchen and bathroom floor... But don’t care too much, this is not detail cleaning. You will also dust, BUT you do not move anything! You go around stuff, remember - THE PASTOR IS ON HIS WAY! On this day you will also change the sheets on all the beds. Delegate chores - have the bed user change their own! You move fast and just hit specifics. Slipshod gets done once a week.

Loose End Day: This is a day where you take care of things that have fallen through the cracks, a day in which you do what you neglected to do, or didn’t realize had to be done until it came up. (You can chose this day to change sheets if it works better for you, and use it as a tickler day to clean the car.)

Errand Day: This is the day you do all your errands. I have more than one of these. Check your calendar; this is how you will decide when to do errands. You might have an appointment that will bring you close to a par-



ticular establishment that you frequent. For example: If you know you are going to a specific place and the dry cleaners is next door, make that one of your errands for that day, even if it isn't technically your errand day. If you make a regular trip somewhere, like a class, or an appointment, then plug in Errand Day to that day as well and accomplish those errands that are in the area.

Family Work Day: This is when your family helps out. You are not the only one who lives in that house, and you should not be the only one who cares for it. It is easier to get help when you know what has to be done. But, remember, you cannot get them to make their bed if you are still lying in yours.

Saturday is usually a good day for Family Work Day and Sunday is usually good for Family Day.

Zone Focus

Every room in the house gets a detailed going over each month. This is called our Zone Focus. At first there will be no

actual cleaning done unless a particular zone is clutter-free.

First, the zone needs to be de-junked. The instructions on how to de-junk are at the end of



this week's lesson. It is a good idea to have a partner for this because we have a hard time distinguishing between garbage and treasures. A partner will help you to decide what you should let go of.

Each section/room of the house is a zone, and each zone is designated for each week on our calendar. There are five weeks in a calendar month (sometimes six, but we ignore the 6th one if that is the case). You will need to write down every room in your house on a piece of paper. For example: entrance way, foyer, powder room, living room, kitchen, dining room, bathroom, bedroom, laundry room, stairs and hall. After that, skip a few lines, and write in list form: week one, week two, week three, week four and week five. Now decide what part of the house will be done on a particular week, and write it in next to the desired week. Notice, on the example of my weekly zone plan that light areas of the house are designated for weeks one and five (because usually, in calendar months, weeks one and 5 are not full weeks).

Here is an example of my zone plan:

Week One – Entrance/Foyer/Powder room
Week Two – Living room/Kitchen
Week Three – Dining room/Bathroom
Week Four – Office/Bedroom
Week Five – Laundry room/stairs and hall

The first and the last weeks are rarely a complete week. Some months have more days than others. Take a look at a calendar. Notice that the first and the fifth weeks in the month are not full weeks. You will choose rooms in the house that have less to do in them for the first and fifth weeks. Remember, I am not talking about the fact that these rooms have less to do in them now. Right now you may be looking at two hours or more of work in your entrance way because of all the stuff piled up in there. We are designating rooms that, once de-junked, there would be little to do.

YEAR																														
January							February							March							April									
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S			
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2						1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20			
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
27	28	29	30	31	24	25	26	27	28	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30											
May							June							July							August									
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September							October							November							December									
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S			
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28			
29	30	27	28	29	30	31	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31														

After you have experimented on your scratch paper with what day will go where, using my example, write it out on a 3 x 5 card (as shown) and post it with your morning and evening routines.

The items you will need in order to de-junk:

- 3 boxes (one needs to be a produce box)
- A small jar or a piggy bank
- Garbage pail
- Large garbage bags (tall kitchen garbage bags are good for good will)
- Timer (you can use your phone)
- Shoe box
- Pen and paper
- Your planner



The produce boxes, which I told you to pick up from week one will be used for storage. You will need approximately 20 of these boxes. Collect them each time you are at the grocery store. You may have to call in advance and they will save them for you. If you are going to use plastic totes for storage, start collecting those and put them where your storage area will be/is.

De-junking a particular zone must be done before any cleaning can happen. When an area is clear of all clutter, then the real cleaning begins. Don't worry that things are dirty or need attention, if your oven hasn't been cleaned for 3 years, it can wait until that zone comes around again. It is like putting the horse before the cart.

You must begin at a specific spot in the room/area. Begin working from the inside out. You will see that it is not overwhelming. You will not pull out more than you can put back, but I want to stress, if you are beginning in an area of the room where there is a closet, you must begin inside the closet.

The primary rule for de-junking? **GET RID OF EVERYTHING YOU DO NOT LOVE!** If you want to give things away; give the recipient a date and time to pick up from you. On that date, if they haven't come, bring the items to Good Will! Do not give them more than three days. You cannot organize clutter.

Be very selective with memorabilia! If there is something that you know should be thrown out, but you are having a hard time parting with it, take a picture of it. You can begin a scrapbook when you have the free time to do so, and you will have free time.

Where do you start? You start in the zone week that you are in right now. If this is the 3rd week of the month and you have designated this to be the kitchen zone, that is where you begin de-junking.

For those of you who have a cleaning service come once a week/every other you will not have to con-



cern yourselves with the detail cleaning list, someone is doing that for you. The 'stash and dash' will stop. Excess belongings will be purged, drawers and cabinets will be straightened, and there will be a place for everything. Your house will have order. For you, de-junking is all you will have to do on your zone days.

It is estimated that for every person living in a home he/she will have one grocery bag of discards a week. A family of 4 times 52 bags a year equals 208 bags of garbage a year lying around a house. Multiply that for three years and you have 624 bags of stuff lying around. Not in bags, of course, all scattered around the place. If you have lived in a house for ten years and are not regularly de-junking- 2,080 bags of stuff is in your house. It is no wonder why it is so much work in the beginning. After the initial de-junking process, you will do a once over in that section of your home to remove clutter once a month on the week designated.

Your daily, morning, and evening routine is what you do every single day. Last week we wrote out a mini daily routine. This week we will add to it. So replace last week's routine cards with these. Copy what is written on two 3x5 cards and post them in the same spot as the others were.

You might wonder why I've written "Sit down, regroup/drink water". This is a time to let those who are living with you know that you need five minutes when you get home for quiet. This is a time for you to regroup and switch gears. Leave work at work. Enjoy the life that you live. Just set a timer for five



GOOD MORNING.....



MORNING ROUTINE
Wake up on time * Make bed * Clothes in dryer
Shower/groom/dress, hair, moisturize/makeup
Put dishes away * Breakfast * Fold/put away laundry
Think about dinner * Check today's to-dos
Check Today's focus * This week's zone
EVENING ROUTINE
Sit down * Regroup/drink water
Change clothes * Set table/dinner clean up (table/floor/dishes)
Wash clothes * Do some things in this weeks zone
Lay out clothes for tomorrow
Check calendar/prepare for tomorrow
Put things to go out with you in the morning by the door
Wash face/moisturize * Pj's/prepare for bed
Check calendar again * Write to-dos

minutes, drink a full glass of water, cultivate a peaceful attitude, and begin your evening routine.

CliffsNotes:

1. Write down and employ new morning and evening routines.
2. Make yourself a weekly plan.
3. De-junk each day, for one hour, (15 min at a time if necessary) in your current calendar zone.
4. Look at and implement your weekly plan every day.
5. Take before and after pictures and take note of trash bag count.
6. Bring your things to Good Will and throw out the garbage (recycling whenever possible).

HOW To DEJUNK - Begin in the Zone you are in for the week.

Tools you will need: Shoebox, 3 boxes (one needs to be a produce box)

large garbage bags (tall kitchen garbage bags and leaf and lawn size) a pen and pad, a timer, a piggy bank or small jar and several produce boxes (apple boxes work best, they have lids and handles)

- Label three boxes: Give away/sell, Storage and Put away (you can use 2 laundry baskets in place of two boxes, one of the three needs to be a produce box or plastic storage bin)

- Work around the room clockwise, start @ 12:00
- Set your timer for 30 minutes, if necessary it can be done 15 min at a time.
- If 12:00 is a closet or a dresser, then you open it up and begin inside it.
- Pick up and look at each item. Do you love it? It is a keeper. If it belongs in that room, put it where it goes now. If it belongs in another room, put it in the “Put away box,” if it is seasonal it goes in the storage box (which must be a produce box or tote).
- If you haven’t slept in it, went out dressed in it, or used it, it goes!
- If it is broken, it goes.
- If it doesn’t belong to you, call the person to come get it.
- An item that is designated for storage is anything that is only used seasonally, such as a Halloween costume and it is November, a holiday decoration and the holiday has long past, a bikini top and it is not swimming weather, or a scarf and it is August.... you get the picture.
- An item that you do not love, or haven’t used, can’t use, doesn’t fit, or won’t use, goes in



the giveaway/sell box.

- In the shoe box you will put small things, photographs, really old film that needs to be developed, pens, safety pins, hair clips, jewelry (check if the pens work on your pad, if they don’t, throw them out), etc.
- Loose change you find goes in the piggy bank or small jar.
- Continue that way around the room until the timer goes off. When it does you take a 15 minute brake, set your timer. If you have to stop for that session, then determine a time to begin again, and respect your appointment. (Example: de-junk @ 4:00, for 30 min.) But if you stop until “later”, you must empty boxes (except storage) by putting items in appropriate rooms.
- When the “Storage” box is full, put the lid on it and put it in the area of your house where storage is kept. It doesn’t matter that there are scarves and bathing suits in that box. Later, the storage area will be organized. Get another produce box and start anew.
- When the Put Away box is full, stop what you are doing, even if the timer has not gone off, and put away all of those times in the rooms they belong. You will continue this even if your timer goes off, until that box is empty.
- Put your “Give Away/Sell” items into the tall kitchen garbage bags and bring them out to the car now.
- Take the garbage out of the house.

- Write down on the pad any items that you need to get for that room or anything you may need to remember. (Example: line drawers and cabinets, call Julia to pick up her kids right glove, get hooks for back packs and jackets, get a mirror and a shelf, get a drawer organizer, get accordion folder for kids papers.)

Just Do It!

Step 6 – We are entirely ready to learn what we need to learn, and also ready to do what is needed to change our habits, homes, and lives.



By now you realize that most people need to be educated in order to be organized in home, life, and business. Although those organizationally gifted know what to do, it doesn't just happen for them, they work at it. It requires action to live in a neat and tidy home. The difference is they know how to do it, where to start, and what to do. They also need little, if any, motivation to begin. Just knowing that something should be done propels them into action.

The organizationally gifted have a low tolerance for sloppiness in others that live with them. We, the organizationally challenged, tend to tolerate a certain level of mess from ourselves and those who live with us before we blow a gasket. There are two things we need to consider with that statement. First, we want to avoid the "blow a gasket" stage of existing, and also we want to maintain living in order, especially when we have been working so hard at de-junking and changing other habits that have begun to become a part of our lives.

If you do not live alone, it can become extremely frustrating to be working so hard at something only to have it sabotaged by those who live with you. Employing what follows keeps that from happening as well as stopping all the unconscious clutter that occurs at home. It will prove to be one of the best practices you will implement in maintaining a clutter-free living space. It is called



“The Tagging Game” At least, that's what I call it. It was introduced by Pam and Peggy in Sidetracked Home Executives.

The reason that they invented this game was because when you follow this system you will have a clean oven, shiny light switch plates, swept floors, clean toilets, dusted furniture



and smudge free mirrors, but if the unconscious clutter isn't dealt with you will be left feeling like a failure and not achieving what you ultimately wanted. What we want is to live in a clean AND TIDY home. This can not happen when you are the only one learning new habits, like “It goes where it goes” and “Do it now!” Something must be done that will keep those you live with from messing up the place you are so diligently cleaning up. This “game” does the trick! Here is how it works.

When a car is left on the street for days without being moved, the local law enforcement puts a warning out that the car is in danger of being towed. On a particular date the car is towed if the owner does not move it. Because of the expense incurred due to towing, the owner, if able, will move that car to avoid such penalties. The same principle is applied to things left out at home in places where they do not belong.

Here is what you do: A piece of paper is placed on the fridge or a bulletin board with each member of the household's



name on it. Make sure there is enough space below each name to make a list of infractions. If Suzie is reading a book and drinking water in the living room and leaves it to get ready to go out to play and leaves the book on the

couch and the empty glass on the end table, she will get a warning from anyone who sees the transgression. “Suzie! You left your book and glass out.” Suzie now has the opportunity to fix the situation. If a fair amount of time has gone by, approximately 10 minutes, not longer (unless Suzie indicates that she needs longer due to a mitigating circumstance, at which time, an allowance of more time will be made) and Suzie did not rectify the situation, the person who “called” the infringement then takes care of the mess themselves. They will put away the book, wash the glass, and put it in the drain or dishwasher. **THEN, THEY WILL FINE THE OFFENDER** for each item that has been dealt with. In this case 50 cents, 25 cents for the book and 25 cents for the glass. Beneath the name of Suzie on the paper, that is on the fridge, the items which were cleaned up are listed with the fine next to it.



What would motivate someone to clean up after another you might ask? At the end of the week, say every Friday, a tally is made for each household member and the person with the least amount of fines wins all the money, which can really add up.

Here are some absolutes in employing this game. Have a meeting and discuss the rules of the Tagging Game, and explain what is about to be implemented. Realize no one will take you seriously the first week. Until they begin to see fines adding up under their name and realizing that they might lose, they will not feel any sense of urgency to join in and comply. When they do, watch out! It can become ruthless, and that is why you must have specific and exact rules in place:

- The parents are fined just as Suzie and Billy are.
- The item in which the person has been tagged for has got to be listed.
- The person who has left something out has got to get a warning first and be given a fair amount of time (which is pre-determined) to clean up his mess.
- Any item that does not belong in an area is taggable.
- A purse on a chair,
- a pair of sunglasses on a counter (or a
- book on an end table.



- Any guest is the responsibility of the person who invited them.
- Any small child who can not be responsible for their mess is the responsibility of the person in charge of them at any given time.
- The person who made the meal for the family will not be charged for the pots and pans used to make the meal, but will be responsible for excess, such as all the cuttings left on the counter from peeling vegetables and spills not wiped up. Unless you are the one designated for kitchen duty after dinner, you must maintain a level of maintenance while you prepare a meal.

If you have children who do not have jobs, you will have to give them an allowance for this to work. It will be the best dime you ever spent. If it is difficult financially to make that happen, I suggest you figure it out. Five or ten dollars is worth its weight in a house-cleaning service because that is what this proves to be. You may need to adjust the fines to ten cents per item, depending on the amount of monies each person in the household has.



You will find also that you are made keenly aware of your own unconscious clutter and really find this to be a great training tool in implementing the habits that you are so diligently trying to incorporate into your life.

Those in your household who receive an allowance must be paid their allowance before tallying the infractions.



The idea is for them to feel the possession of the money so that they realize the loss of it when it is paid out. You may have to do as I did years ago; I put an envelope on the fridge with 5 one dollar bills in it for each child. The visual image of the money serves as a stronger temptation; they believe they will actually get that money. The first week you play, someone in your family will win ten or twenty or more dollars. From that point forward, you'll find everyone eagerly participating in the game without any provocation from you.

From experience I have found that after a month or so of the infraction game being enforced the house just stays clear of everyone's castoffs. Suddenly no one is tagging anymore. There are two things that you must be aware of. One: You will be tempted to make allowances for the ONE child that is getting tagged, and either not tag them, or persuade another member of the family not to. Why? Well lets face it, the house is being kept up, and he is trying so hard. Lets give him a

break, ok? NO! NO! NO! I tell you, once another member of the family gets hold of that philosophy you have LOST your credibility. Compromise breeds compromise, and you will be hard pressed to get it started again with any seriousness.

Two: If you allow ONE busy day where you have slacked, or just find yourself needing to run out before cleaning something up due to a schedule conflict (this happens to Organizationally Gifted people too) and you don't take care of it tootsweet, it will snap you back so fast you won't know what hit the place. The rest of the household will march to the same drum and you will be right back where you were before you discovered this amazing tickler to enforce good habits.

Should my second warning occur, and you don't get it together fast enough to stop the onslaught of the oh-so-familiar past, here is what you have to do. Get the house cleaned up, mentioning it to no one, and then announce "The Tagging Game is back on!" Put the sheet of paper up on the fridge or bulletin board and watch people get in line.

Should the first example happen, well, I'm telling you that is a different story. You know what happens when you cry wolf enough times, no one comes running. You will have to eat some humble pie here, and apologize for allowing exceptions--and make a stipulation, that if you do that again, you will be fined \$5 to get the game back on track. Remember not to do it, and resume without any mishaps. Just take my hindsight and don't make any allowances.

Let me know how this goes for you, I would love to hear about it. Pictures would be fabulous. You can reach me at this email: kathy@TheTidyTutor.com



Kathy@TheTidyTutor.com

Love Yourself

Step 7 – Humbly accept the fact that we are wonderful just as we are, even if we never pick up an article of clothing, or wash a dish; even if nothing changes externally at all.



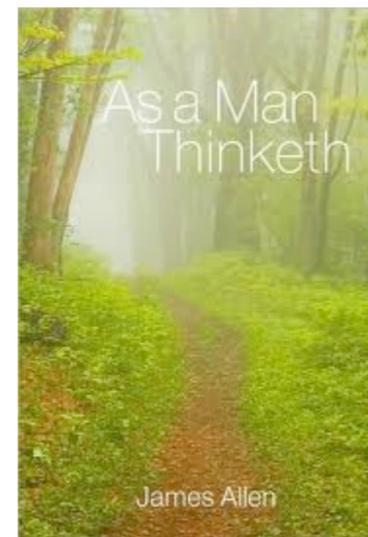
The mindset that all external criteria must be in line for any individual to be happy with themselves is bogus. Everyone's standard is different, depending on what their "ism" is. Let's say that your father was adamant about particular perfectionist methods of doing things. He was always checking your homework, making you do it over and over again, because it was not to his standard. He checked your bed after it was made, and if it were a bit out of line, he pulled the bedding off and made you remake it until it was right, according to his specifications. If this scenario is true for you, then most likely, the standard you hold for external criteria will be quite different from the person whose "ism" was that of proper diction and posture. If your outward appearance was all that mattered to your caregiver and you were always put under scrutiny and judged by certain standards for appearance, your standard of "okay" would be very different than others. Our requirements for "okay" are not external, they are internal. If they were external, then all of us would feel good about ourselves if x, y, and z were fulfilled. There is no perfection in life, learning to accept that and embrace life, on life's terms, is the beginning to experiencing joy.



In our particular challenge in the organizational category of life, it is easy for us to measure our value of self based on the condition of our home. The feelings of inadequacy and self-

loathing are rampant within our ranks. Even for those of us who mask it with outward acceptance, saying things like "This is just how I am," or, "I work better this way," or, "I am organized! I know where everything is, I'm just messy." Even with all kinds of justification, we still feel shame at an unexpected guest's arrival. Add to that, the inability to fulfill our deepest dreams and desires because we just can't get our acts together, and living life becomes a time bomb for frustration and inner pain.

Your next assignment is to think good thoughts of you. Deliberately, list all your positive attributes. Write them on a 3x5 card and tape them to the mirror that you use most often while grooming. Below are some for you to choose from. You can write in some of your own.



I am helpful, I am giving, I am loving, I am creative, I am positive, I love to laugh, I am funny, I am compassionate, I love to play, I am encouraging, I am faithful, I am kind, I am patient, I am gentle, I love people, I love to live, I am a good friend, I love to learn

Because of the social stigma that We OCP (organizationally challenged people) hold, being seen as lazy, unmotivated, and often even dirty, it is no wonder that we, many times, feel bad about ourselves. If you can relate to this sentiment, please, meditate and take time to undo this negative association that you have

internalized about yourself. Just as it is not appropriate to think negatively about yourself because you can't play the piano or learn a language easily, it is also not appropriate to feel bad about yourself because you cannot keep an orderly house or life. What is important is that you love yourself, accept yourself, and think good thoughts about you.

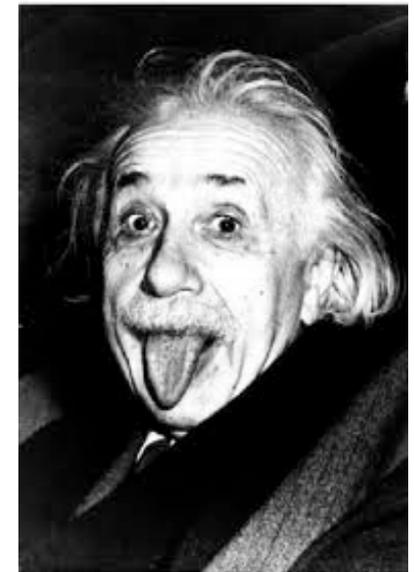
Have you ever heard the phrases "Like attracts like," or, "As a man thinketh so is he"? If you haven't heard these phrases, Google them. I will expound on these sentiments, as well, as I explore with you the process of becoming organized while learning to love yourself.

First, I wish to begin by saying that I have compassion for anyone who has had less than an exemplary childhood, which, of course, is most of us. Some more devastating than others, but the kinds of childhood I am writing about here are the ones where there were personal verbal comments made by the parent or guardian regarding the child's looks, personality, habits, etc. I implore you to not compare yourself with anyone else's experience. This often tends to invalidate your feelings and pain and keep you from addressing your issues. Denial is a serious and dreadful fixation. Secret and hidden thoughts have power, but when they are brought out into the open, they lose



authority and eventually shrivel up and die (or just disappear). There is a root from which all dysfunction stems. There is always a root to a problem. Believing the lies that someone told you while growing up is the root to many of our issues. You may be thinking, "How dare I feel bad about myself. Look at Gibby's life, what she went through. I had nothing to live through like she did!" That may be true, but acknowledging Gibby's poor circumstances will not help you with yours, nor does it make yours nonexistent. If you say negative things or think unkind thoughts about yourself, if you compare yourself to others and see yourself less than they are, it is necessary to address the root of why you do these things.

I give you permission to be selfish, which is a word that has been given a raw deal in my opinion. We must be selfish, i.e., thinking of oneself, and often. When you are on an airplane, you are told to first put the oxygen mask on yourself before helping a child with his. The reason for this is, if you lose consciousness you will not be able to help your child at all. By trying to be selfless and putting others first, you actually can harm them. How can we take care of anyone else if we are not properly taken care of ourselves?



When Mother Theresa was ministering to the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, she, at first, decided to eat and live as those



she was helping, in order to remain humble and fair. This lifestyle was soon abandoned, because Mother Theresa and her volunteers lacked the strength to help those they were called to help. The selfless thought that inspired their living as those who needed ministering turned out to be misguided. Although well-intentioned, absolute selflessness does not work. We must first think of ourselves.

Meaning well is never a prerequisite to success, just as good intentions are nothing without action. Not being aware of natural laws does not exempt you from experiencing their consequences. A child who is unaware of the Law of Gravity, who thoughtlessly walks off the stairs or tumbles off a couch, falls just the same. They soon learn what the Law of Gravity is and how to respect it. You may not be aware of the Law of Attraction, but that does not mean that you do not experience it daily. You may not be aware that what you think about most, you will bring about, but that does not mean that it does not happen. You may not believe that what you expect out of yourself will manifest into reality no matter how bad you want the opposite, but that does not negate the truth: we get what we expect.

Albert Einstein said, "The most important question you'll ever ask is whether the Universe is a friendly place. The answer

you give will be your reality." Also, it has been said by Charles Capp author of The Tongue a Creative Force, "Those that say they can, and those that say they can't, are both right." Right now, I ask you to contradict any negative picture you have of yourself. Bring into thought all the teachings in previous chapters. You are not disorganized, just as you are not unmusical; you simply have not had proper instruction. Think order; wake up thinking that you can be whatever you choose to be. Stop listening to those old tapes and get yourself some new ones!

Something happens in our brains that can be monitored. As we learn anything, whether it is true or false, pathways begin to form. These pathways become information that is readily available to us in the form of knowledge. It is how we can be completely convinced that the Eiffel tower is in France, even though we have never been there to see it. It is how we are certain of our names and no one could convince us otherwise. But, did you know, that if a pathway is ne-



RESPONSE
ABILITY

glected it reverts back to its original form, much like a deer path in the woods. If it is not used, eventually the plant life

takes over and it will no longer be recognizable as a path, nor could it be used as one. We can reprogram ourselves in the same way. Are there pathways in your mind that you would prefer to be gone? Would you like to form different, more productive and self-serving ones? Well, then, do it! We are all the product of our thoughts. Now that you are a grown-up, you can be your own parent, be your own boss, and think what you want to think. Create new truths and ignore old negative thoughts until they are but a distant memory that is difficult to recall. You can do it, if you choose. Life is good.

Children are the true victims in this world. They have no choice. They are a captive audience and are subject to their parent or guardian's desires. However, as adults, we must come to terms that childhood is over and we are not victims any longer. Get help with issues that are plaguing your present. Address thought patterns and behaviors that are counterproductive to happiness. This can be done through many different venues. Private therapy, competent counseling in your brand of faith, prayer, meditation, reading books directed toward helping with what ails you, and then taking the action necessary to change.

In whichever way our self-image has been damaged, it is not relevant at this point. What is relevant and critical is its repair. This has to be done deliberately and you are the one who needs to do the restoration work. Here, again, there is a 'no excuse' rule that applies. If you want to have a better self-image, you must make it happen. Once again, I tell you to be your own parent. There is nothing you can do about what has



already been done, but you have complete power over what will be done, what is, what pathways you keep clear, and which ones you neglect. I realize it is diffi-

cult to change tapes that have been playing in your mind for years, but it is not impossible. In fact, it is necessary, if you wish to see change and be who you wish to be.

Years ago, when life was not so great for me, I came across Wayne Dyer on PBS. I loved what he had to say and so I picked up his book. In the introduction, I read something that changed my life. What I learned was, if I continue to blame someone for why things are as they are (however justifiable they were) I would not be able to change a thing about how I was living. I realized that by focusing on what someone had done or was doing, I was saying, "There is nothing I can do! My hands are tied!" Well, that freaked me out. If I continued blaming someone for the state of my life, nothing would ever change for me. I had to take responsibility, which just means, the ability to respond. It does not mean that what has happened is because of something you have done, or that what-

ever has happened was all right. It means, simply, respond to whatever happens or has happened, with a deliberate ability.

Something else that made a great difference to me was learning the meaning of the word forgive. It does not mean that what was done was okay, it means to let go of, or to untie. Picture yourself, dragging around behind you, things that were done to you or said about you. Spiritually, this is exhausting, and it manifests itself physically. Even when sitting still, by not forgiving, our past hurts are right there beside us. This does not serve us, it can only hurt and keep us from being who we are meant to be and from living the life we long for. Let go of past injustices and give yourself the ability to move on in a direction of your choice. Make a conscious decision to forgive. Say this: "I know that what was done to me and the things that were said to me were not right, even very wrong, but still, I can make a conscious decision to take my life back and forgive (let go of) what was done. That person or those people cannot pay the price to restore what was taken from me. I will stop expecting payment. I will let go of those actions against me and leave them on the curb. If a thought comes up that makes me feel bad, I will meditate, seek help, talk to someone, read something inspirational, but I will not continue down the road of self-pity. I acknowledge the fact that I was hurt, I validate my feelings by the realization that those things did happen to me, but I refuse to lose another minute of my life, going back to a time that cannot serve me. I am thankful that I am free. Help me to continue on to a new road, one that I choose to take and not one that was chosen for me." Then rejoice, be

glad, get happy, and stay that way. You are the master of your future, the past is gone, and there is nothing you can do about it anymore. Whether self-afflicted or unjustly placed upon you, the past is over.

There are many great examples of people who endured great hardships and were able to move on and do great things. These same people live full and happy lives; Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell, Dan Caro, and Joyce Mayer, to name a few. I recommend looking into these people's lives. There are lessons, inspiration, and encouragement in learning about them, as well as some wonderful help on how to move on after you have been hurt. Should you decide not to go the route of forgiveness, you still can become organized by following this program. The point to all of this is the importance of loving yourself and implementing change. Whatever you believe you are, for whatever reason, you will act accordingly. I propose that you believe that you have all the potential in the world to be organized. What do you have to lose?



FREE AT LAST!

Step 8 – We make a list of all the things we want to do and places we want to go when we finally have more time because of our new ordered lives.



Me and my 2 girls, both OCs.
Emily and Katie

First, I want to make it clear that it is not always the case that the organizationally challenged cannot get their dreams off the ground, or that they are not able to go places they always wanted to go, or do the things that they always dreamed of doing. Nor is it always the case that the organizationally challenged feels bad about themselves because of the lives they live behind their closed doors of chaos. I can tell you, though, most of the organizationally challenged are in crisis, and their lives are directly affected by their disorganized existences.

Simple things like getting a sympathy card out in the mail, making the phone call that desperately needs to be made, sending a graduation gift out, or writing a thank-you note, can be put off for only so long. Friendships have been broken, accounts have been levied, and jobs have been lost, due to chronic procrastination. Things that are easy to do, and would have taken minutes to perform, somehow become paralyzing for many of us. Procrastination should be a classified disease! Its effects can certainly be as devastating.

If it is the man who has the disorder gene and the woman who does not, it is often typical that she follows behind him, cleaning up, and smoothing things out. I believe it is a cultural thing. Even though women have, for decades now, been in the work



place full-time, they still carry much of the responsibilities of home and family. I have helped many divorced men, who were not aware of their issue with disorganization until a divorce had occurred. Once

they moved out and started living alone, they found they were unable to keep a house.

There are those who are able to completely function outside in the world being who they are and doing what they intended, even while living in chaos. These people are usually artists, and highly motivated individuals, with fair to high self-esteem. This makes them able to counter the feelings of inadequacy regarding their inability to keep orderly lives. They are able to see passed their disability, and live their lives, inside and outside of their homes just fine. Would they wish that home life could be more ordered? Do you think that they could do better in most or all of their endeavors if they could be more organized? My answer to that is, undoubtedly yes. But for these OC types, being organized doesn't really matter to them all that much.

While I was listening to talk radio, an artist was speaking about how she was a mess at home. It was an issue worth noting, but she did not speak of it as if it were a severe detriment.



She spoke of it just as if she were left-handed, as if it were a cute quirky personality trait. Sure, there were piles, she lost things, and was often late because she didn't manage her time, or couldn't find her keys, but she was functioning happily, and accepted herself as she was. Her darling husband accepted her and helped her at home. They lived life together in harmony. This is extremely rare,

more times than not, disorder brings discord at home, and often the partner, who is frustrated by the mess, threatens to, or actually does, walk out and seek separation.

Compare two people who lack the ability to walk and are in wheelchairs. Both know that they could function better with working legs—that is a given—but one makes the best of what he has, and becomes what he has always dreamed of, and the other sees his disability as bigger than his ability, and lives far below what he dreams. Much of life is in perception.

Speaking with the functionally disorganized, I have gained some insight into what makes them different. Hindsight is 20/20, they say. And I say, whenever you can, grab some hindsight and jump ahead of the line. I will use two people as

representatives of both types of an Organizationally Challenged, my daughter and myself.

Katie (my daughter), age 30: She is highly motivated and successful. She is confident and does not let her home life disaster stop her from doing and going. These types of people do not allow their dysfunction to define them. They are able to see their attributes bigger than their detriments. They are able to snub their noses at what other people think. They seem to march to a different drum. These are the quirky types that you see out there in the world. She can wear an outfit that no one else can wear (she has the imagination for such attire, no doubt, because all of the times she neglected laundry and had to be innovative). While she recognizes issues such as procrastination and sloppiness, she has a determination that pushes her through, and she accomplishes despite her disordered life at home. This is not to say that she does not long to be more organized, or that she wouldn't benefit from this system- in fact she does. This just illustrates that all OCs are not created equally, nor are all messes seen by the same people, the same way.

Kathy (me), age 50: I had aspirations and dreams, but I lacked confidence. This lack of confidence is what propelled me into bed with a pint of Haagen-



Dazs when looking at the mess at home and urgent life issues. It was difficult for me to not allow my surroundings and what I have heard said of me, define me. It was, and sometimes still is, work for me to see my attributes bigger than my detriments. I needed to work hard at snubbing my nose at what other people thought. For the type of slob that I am, there is an absolute need to learn how to be orderly so that I can function on more than borderline survival. Self image was the main difference between S.L.O.B. #1 (Katie) and S.L.O.B. #2 (Me)

It became necessary for me to consciously think about the things that I thought about regarding myself and my life. When I did this I realized that there were many things that were negative. So, I wrote down the things I was thinking and made a list of other things that were contrary to them and said them over and over to myself while looking in the mirror. For example: “I will never be successful, I always have so many needs, I never get what I want,” became “I am successful, I have more than I need and want.” “Nothing good ever happens for me,” became “Good things happen for me, I can have them, I deserve them, I enjoy them, I receive them.” As time went by, and not too much time, mind you, I began to believe these things, and I became more like S.L.O.B. #1. I actually didn’t know that I was thinking so negatively about myself and my life, but when I took the time and asked the right questions, I saw the truth. We don’t have to stay where we are, there is always a choice. Taking action makes things change and I’m living proof of that.

Of course, there are varying degrees to each of these two examples. It does not mean that one doesn’t lack self-esteem in some things, or that the other does not have self-esteem in others. As I mentioned, all messes are not seen by the same people, the same way. A mess to one person is nothing to me, and that same mess makes another cringe. This system will work for anyone, and help even the most organized person if he wanted to improve. All of these observations are just that—observations that I have made in the twenty plus years that I have been helping people with their disordered lives.

Session Three -Week Three

(CONTINUE WITH ALL YOU HAVE BEEN PRACTICING UP UNTIL NOW AND INCORPORATE WHAT FOLLOWS.)

1. Do it now! Not later.
2. Think about tomorrow today.
3. Get up half an hour before you need to.
4. Shower, dress, and groom before anything.
5. Say “no”!
6. Write everything down.
7. Close cabinets, cupboards, and drawers.
8. If it leaves your hand, it goes where it goes.

Here is the last set of habits to memorize and practice:

9. Don't pass it up, pick it up.
10. Hurry up and slow down.
11. Eat sitting down.
12. Go to bed on time.

Don't pass it up, pick it up: This one habit revolutionized my life. I know that seems so odd. At one point the house became so cluttered that ignoring it became the norm. Before I knew it, it became natural to just step over things. When I began to implement this habit I couldn't believe that I actually felt that it was ever acceptable to ignore things that littered my home. After a while it almost hurt to pass up something that was on the floor. Now, I just bend over and pick up what I see. Go figure!

Hurry up and slow down: Sounds odd, doesn't it? Can you slow down and hurry up at the same time? Well maybe not, but this is still a pertinent habit to maintain. We must keep both of these actions in mind throughout our day. We have a warped perception of time and feel as if there is not ever enough of it for us to get things done. We move too quickly through things that are important such as getting change from a purchase, our receipt and identification from a bank teller, and many times even more important things. We hurry through, never living in the moment, always looking for our next move or task.

Hurry up comes into play for us when there is a job to do. We tend to move slowly. We all have seen our organizationally gifted friends get things done. They really move fast through a task, don't they? What I have begun to do is to pretend that I am one of them. I pretend to be my friend Christine or my sister Maria, depending on what job I need accomplished.

If I have to get my grown children to do something for me around the house I pretend to be Christine. If I need to clean out my car after vacation or my house after a party, then I pretend I'm Maria. My nature is to move slowly through life's to-dos. So I have to think HURRY UP! It gives a sense of urgency to a job that serves as a realization that what I am doing is important and absolutely needs to be done.

Eat sitting down: Due to the fact that we think there is no time for anything and we tend to rush through life, eating on the run is common among our ranks. Employing the habit of “Eat sitting down,” and becoming aware of what we are doing while we are eating will prove to be a great asset to your general health. The reason that this is incorporated in my course in organization is because it goes along with our persona of being.

Our sense of self needs to change to live organized. We have internalized so many skewed beliefs regarding what is acceptable that it is difficult to recognize what is unacceptable. Please employ this habit. Take the time to do the things that need to be done the way they are intended to be done. Eat sitting down.

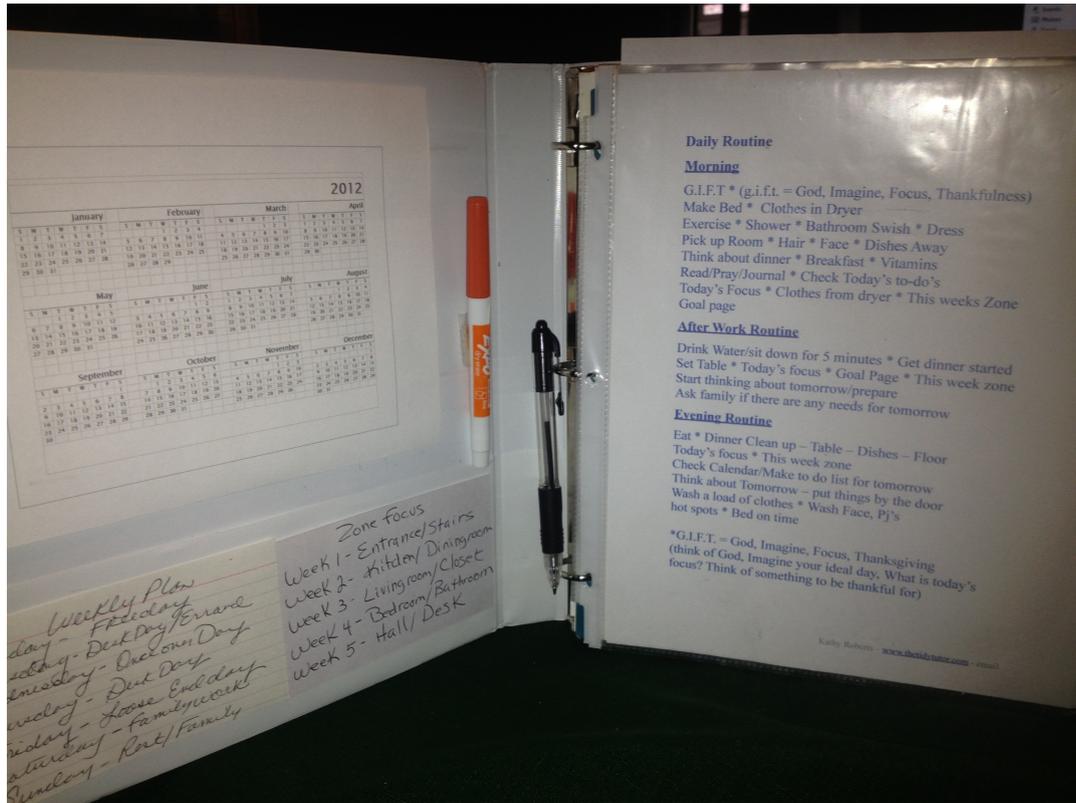
Go to bed on time: This habit is a hard one to employ sometimes. But I can tell you, that if you follow your weekly plan and stay focused on what is important first, bedtime can actually happen as planned. Without putting things off until later, by resisting the sidetracked impulse to go online or accept that invite to go to the dump for recreation, your life can run smoothly from morning to night.

To implement this system, you will need: a one-inch binder, plastic protector sheets, loose-leaf paper, three blank dividers, and A-Z dividers. You will also need a one-inch spiral notebook, a 3x5 scratch pad, and your planner.

All your home/living life needs will be at your finger tips. Account numbers, billing addresses, passwords, and dates to remember such as birthdays and anniversary.

Inside the binder: (purchase one already made) You will need: A one-inch binder, 5 plastic page protector sheets, 3 blank dividers, A-Z dividers, a dry erase marker, a small sticky piece of Velcro, a pen with a clip, index cards (optional), and loose-leaf paper.

The order in which the binder is set up is listed below. There are examples of each individual page. You can click the image below to watch the video in which you and I will construct the binder together. Inside that link there is a section to download all of the printable pages that make up the binder. Every page can be customized to fit your life. You can also purchase a ready-to-use binder through my site. All you will have to do is customize some of the contents for your own personal life.



Page 1 – On a page protector write “Daily Routine”

Page 2 – On the same page protector on the other side write “Goals”

Page 3 – On page 3 write “Desk Day”

Page 4 – On the back of page 3 write “Crisis Cleaning”

Page 5 – Write all of the detail cleaning lists on a page protector

Page 6 – On page 6 write “Dates to Remember – Jan to April”

Page 7 – On the back of page 6 write “Dates to Remember – May to August”

Page 8 – On page 8 write “Dates to Remember – September to December”

Page 9 – On the back of page 8 write “Meal plan/grocery list charts”

3-5 blank dividers (with pockets would be ideal) and some loose leaf paper before each

A-Z deciders with 2 sheets of loose-leaf paper before each

Finally hole punch a thin planner that is easily purchased, or just download the current year’s calendar pages onto 8.5x11 paper.

YOU MUST DO THIS! It is critically important in the success of implementing this system, and maintaining a peaceful ordered predictable life.

On the bottom left inside cover, you will tape a 3x5 card that has your weekly plan and your zone focus written on it.

On a 3x5 white card write: “Zone Focus Weeks” on the top center, then on the lines below, skip a line for each and write “week 1”, “week 2”, “week 3”, “week 4”, and “week 5”. Next to each write the zone focus you have determined for each week.

Weekly Plan

SUNDAY	FAMILY/DESK DAY
Monday	Free Day
Tuesday	Desk Day
Wednesday	Loose End Day
Thursday	Once Over Day
Friday	Errand Day
Saturday	Family Work Day

Zone Focus Weeks

WEEK 1	ENTRANCE/STAIRS
Week 2	KITCHEN/DINING ROOM
WEEK 3	LIVING ROOM/PIANO ROOM
WEEK 4	BEDROOM/HALLWAY/BATHROOM
WEEK 5	POWDER ROOM/SIDE ENTRANCE/LAUNDRY ROOM

Below are examples of what each page consists of: First Page:

Routines – Example - in page protector

Morning Routine

Make bed - Pick up room - Drink Water
 Clothes in dryer - Exercise - Shower
 Bathroom swish - Dress Hair Face
 Vitamins Dishes away Think about dinner
 Check Today's to-dos Today's focus
 Fold clothes This weeks zone

After Work Routine

Drink water/sit down for 5 minutes
 Get dinner started Delegate Set Table
 Today's focus Zone focus
 Start thinking about tomorrow
 Ask family if there are any needs for tomorrow

Evening Routine

Eat * Dinner clean up – table/dishes/floor
 Today's focus Zone focus
 Wash a load of clothes
 Check calendar/Make to do list
 Think about tomorrow – Check calendar -
 Put things by the door Wash face PJ's
 Hot spots Make To do list * Bed on time

2nd Page: Goals – Example - in page protector.

GOALS

Exercise 3 times a week – Walk 2 times a week
Day 1, Day 2, Day 3 – Walk , Walk

Work on book for at least 30 minutes daily
Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, Day 5, Day 6, Day 7

Work on website/business – Write out today's plan
Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, Day 5, Day 6, Day 7

Practice Guitar 3 times a week
One, Two, Three

3rd-Page: Desk Day - Example - in page protector

DESK DAY

Open mail over garbage * Write dates due on calendar

File papers * Pay bills * Balance check book
Organize desk

Check dates to remember/write in planner * Make note to
purchase: cards and gifts

This week's menu plan * Grocery list * Wrap gifts
Write out cards/thank you notes

Answer invitations * Check stamp/office inventory

Check Calendar: work, school, appointments, plan week/
month accordingly

4th Page – back of 3: **Crisis Cleaning** - Example in page protector

CRISIS CLEANING

15 minutes - Living Room
15 minutes - Kitchen
15 minutes - Bathroom

15 minutes - Living Room
15 minutes - Kitchen
15 minutes - Bathroom

Take a break for 15 minutes – repeat as necessary

Additional Rooms

Bedroom - Basement - Office - Garage - Attic

5th Page: – All of the detail cleaning list pages go in one page protector

LIVING ROOM

Cobwebs	Woodwork
Doors	Wash Floor
Knickknacks	Windowsills/windows
Faces of Furniture	Wash smudges on walls
Inside anything - Drawers/ closets	Entertainment devises
Light Fixtures	Surfaces - Dust/Polish
High Places/ledges	Radiator
Cull Magazines	Shampoo Rug (yearly)
	Window Treatments

ENTRANCE WAY

Cobwebs	Windowsills/windows
Doors	Wash smudges on walls
Knickknacks	Entertainment devises
Faces of Furniture	Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Inside anything - Drawers/ closets	Radiator
Light Fixtures	Shampoo Rug (yearly)
High Places/ledges	Window Treatments
Cull Magazines	Shelves
Woodwork	Shake Throw Rug
Wash Floor/vacuum	Wash Bedding

OFFICE

Cobwebs	Windowsills/ windows
Doors	Wash smudges on walls
Knickknacks	Entertainment devises
Faces of Furniture	Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Inside anything - Drawers/ closets	Radiator
Light Fixtures	Shampoo Rug (yearly)
High Places/ledges	Window Treatments
Cull Magazines	Computer
Woodwork	Printer/fax
Wash Floor/vacuum	Shelves

LAUNDRY ROOM

Cobwebs
Doors
Wipe down washer/dryer
Cupbords/storage areas
Light Fixtures
High Places/ledges
Woodwork
Wash Floor
Wash smudges on walls
Inside Anything

LIVING ROOM

Cobwebs	Woodwork
Doors	Wash Floor
Knickknacks	Windowsills/windows
Faces of Furniture	Wash smudges on walls
Inside anything - Drawers/ closets	Entertainment Devises
Light Fixtures	Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Chandelier	Radiator
Pictures - glass/frames	Shampoo Rug (yearly)
High Places/ledges	Window Treatments

Kitchen

Cobwebs
Doors
Knickknacks
Faces of Furniture
Inside anything - Drawers/
closets
Light Fixtures
High Places/ledges
Wash Bedding
Under Bed
Cull Magazines

Woodwork
Wash Floor
Windowsills/windows
Wash smudges on walls
Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Radiator
Window Treatments
Pictures - glass/frames
inside/outside/cabinets
Faces of Oven/Dishwasher
Appliances on countertops
smudges on walls

BEDROOM

Cobwebs
Doors
Knickknacks
Faces of Furniture
Inside anything - Drawers/closets
Light Fixtures
High Places/ledges
Wash Bedding
Under Bed
Cull Magazines
Woodwork

Wash Floor/vacuum
Windowsills/windows
Wash smudges on walls
Entertainment devises
Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Radiator
Shampoo Rug (yearly)
Window Treatments
Entertainment Devices
Pictures - glass/frames

BATHROOM

Cobwebs
Doors
Bathtub Tile
Faces of Furniture
Inside anything - Drawers/closets
Toilet - inside/outside
Light Fixtures
High Places/ledges
Wash Throw Rug
Cull Magazines
Woodwork
Wash Floor
Pictures - glass/frames

Windowsills/windows
Sink
Wash smudges on walls
Entertainment devises
Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Radiator
Shampoo Rug (yearly)
Window Treatments
Wall Tike
Bathtub
Medicine Cabinet
All Fixtures

Dining Room

Cobwebs
Doors
Knickknacks
Faces of Furniture
Inside anything - Drawers/closets
Light Fixtures
Chandelier
High Places/ledges
Wash Throw Rug

Windowsills/windows
china closet
Wash smudges on walls
Surfaces - Dust/Polish
Radiator
Shampoo Rug (yearly)
Window Treatments
Woodwork
Wash Floor/vacuum rug
Pictures - glass/frames

**6th - 8th Pages:
Dates to Remember - Example in page protector
Dates to Remember:**

January	February
Martha Platt - 12th Birthday	Lauren 27th Birthday
March	April
Mom & Dad 13th Anniversary	

Dates to Remember:

May	June
July	August

To Do:

1. Take pictures of the space before, take pictures of the space after, send the pics to me and we can celebrate together! Keep them so that you can encourage yourself from time to time.
2. Transfer all your known events into your planner (always write down EVERYTHING you need to do, or say you will do immediately in your planner).
3. Enter all friends and family members' birthdays, anniversaries, etc. in the appropriate months on "Dates To Remember" pages.
4. Inside the A-Z dividers: As you have the information in hand while doing bills, transfer all information such as bank information (ex. Washington Mutual 675 Paterson Ave Carlstadt, NJ 1-800-555-5555 routing number 5555 password clean-freak), credit card account information (ex. # 5555 5555 5555 5555, type of card, exp. date), addresses and phone numbers of electric, cable, phone, internet bills, etc.
5. Continue working at de-junking at least one hour each day in this week's calendar zone.
6. Bring your things to good will, and take a count of all bags that have been removed from the house (garbage and otherwise). Send me the trash bag count.
7. Think of things that you always are looking for and determine a place for each item. Think of things you need in order to give those things a home.
Look to see if you have the thing you will need at home. You probably

- will. Make a list of things you need to get. (Example: Hook for keys, dog leash, and purse, basket for books used daily, boxes for mail, basket for things that come out of your pocket and onto your dresser, decorative bowl by the entrance for sun glasses, Ipod, ear buds, doorknob bag).
8. Find/purchase and set up the areas for each thing you decide needs a home.

The Unique, That Is You!

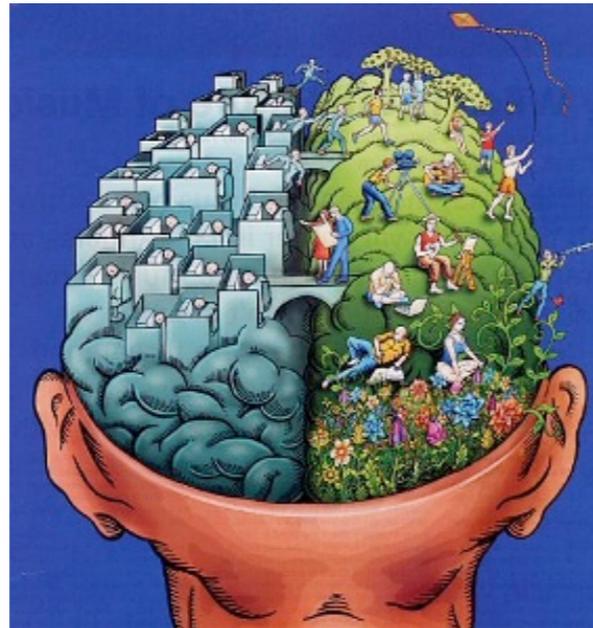
Step 9 - We make direct amends to ourselves for every negative thing we think of ourselves, because we simply don't know how to do what is innate in others.



Told from the OC's perspective, there are things that you will learn in this book that are unique because of the perspective from which it is given. They are more easily accepted, because they are coming from a reformed slob. Organizationally gifted instructors lack the sympathy and empathy for what life is like for the organizationally-challenged. It is futile to say to us, "Just do it!" We think... "Just do what?"

There is something called the Expert Theory. The expert cannot possibly teach their expertise to laymen. When an expert instructs, they begin in the middle. What is elementary to them is complicated to us. The expert does not understand that basic elements of a subject matter are not automatically grasped by those who are novices. So, the organized person will assume a OC knows where to start. Here is a common suggestion from self-help organizing gurus: Take note of what has to get done, make a list of those things, and then prioritize. That kind of instruction doesn't work for us. Hearing those instructions sends us to bed with a pint of ice cream and a rerun of *Leave it to Beaver*, wishing that June Cleaver would come rescue us.

The creative, right-side-of-the-brain, disorganized thinkers can't break things down. We see the entire picture- the entire



big mess. You want me to prioritize what? Don't you know that to us, everything is a priority. I begin panicking just thinking about that kind of coaching!

Below are two of the habits given from the book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, first published in 1989, written by Stephen R. Covey. This is "the expert theory" in manifestation.

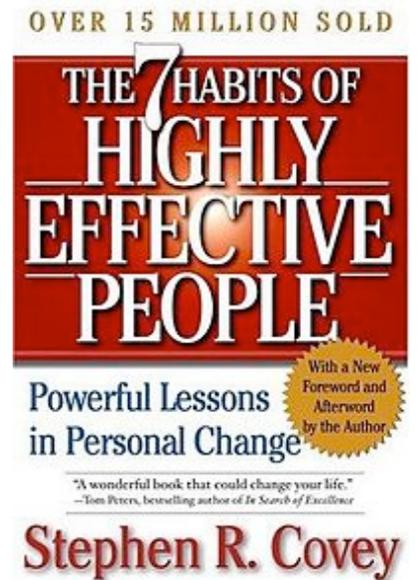
Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Synopsis: Self-discover and clarify your essential character values and life goals. Visualize the ideal characteristics for each of your respective roles and relationships in life.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Synopsis: Plan, prioritize, and execute your week's tasks based on importance rather than urgency. Evaluate whether your efforts embody your desired values, move you toward goals, and improve the roles and relationships that were detailed in Habit 2.

Covey's book has sold more than 15 million copies in 38 languages since its first publication. Oh my God! Are there that many people who understand that kind of instruction? Or, are there that many people who desperately seek success and know that it is their habits that are stopping them from achieving it? I go for the latter.



This is what I think: Since the OG types are the ones who can pull off the monumental task of writing a book and getting it finished to the point of publishing; books that outline instruction as written above is all we are going to get, because it is how they think. If they wrote how we think, they would be put in a straight jacket! I actually loved the book, Seven Habits.... I did learn much from it but was not able to implement it's direction.

I have a OG friend who read it at the same time as me. While we both loved it, she got so much more out of it than I did, she was able to grasp the words and not run screaming for the freezer. I wasn't. You might be saying, "Wait, you wrote this book and you are not organizationally gifted?" True... But I'm telling you that if I

hadn't implemented what I have outlined here, there is no way on earth I could have gotten this off the ground, written, and finished. It would have only gotten to the point of thought. There would have been no room for doing. It would have been difficult enough to find a pen, and even if I did get words down, I would have lost them.

You must realize that for something to work, you have to work it. While I've really emphasized and will continue to empha-



size the great qualities that are inborn, and unique to you/us, the organizationally-challenged, the slob, I must also call a spade a spade. We don't move too fast, we don't like to do what is not fun, we do not like to continue on a project after we have started it. Often, we need a real honest-to-goodness reason to do anything.



Sometimes that reason is, well, the bathroom is dirty so it needs to be cleaned. When the bathroom is clean, we don't believe that anything needs to be done, because it is already clean, but guess what? There is an entire group of people who think that statement is not true. The bathroom needs to be cleaned when it is scheduled to be cleaned. That is how it *stays* clean.

Organized people don't need a bomb to blow up underneath them to get moving. Disorganized people do. Recognizing what makes you tick will really help you to succeed using this system. This system will work if you work it, it will not work, if you don't. Please realize that you didn't get into the mess overnight and you aren't going to get out of it overnight. It is a process, but the process will not begin at all unless you are willing to embrace Step 6.

We are entirely ready to learn what we need to learn, and also ready to do what was needed to change our habits, homes, and lives.

One of the most favorite things I say to myself is “doing nothing gets you nowhere.” This is a time-tested system that works without fail, if it is employed. Please do not cut corners once you begin and it is working for you. After you have successfully worked this program, then, by all means, tweak it so it becomes a better fit for your personal life. For now, it is for your best interest to follow the instructions to the letter.

Realize that I have worked this system since 1988; it has changed through the years, as have the times. At first, it was geared toward the stay-at-home mom. There was a baking day assigned to one of the weeks’ focuses and there were two days assigned for deep cleaning. We no longer have the luxury to spend 3-6 hours on housework in a day. Through the years and through trial and error, using this system myself and helping others follow it, I am delighted to be able to share my experience and results with you. It is one of the reasons for writing this book. I have learned so much in these past 23 years, and sharing this knowledge will enable you to jump right in and get the best start possible.

As I mentioned before, organizationally gifted people work at it. If you go to anyone of your friends’ organized homes on a Saturday morning, you’ll see what is going on there. Throw



rugs are outside, in a heap, by the back door and there is a bucket of sudsy water on the kitchen floor. Maybe a garage door is opened and the contents of it (all 6 things) are out in the driveway while some organization and cleaning of its shell is being done. Someone might be raking and weeding, sweeping a walkway, pulling out the garbage and recycling containers to sweep behind them. Even people who have landscapers and a cleaning service every other week do this kind of maintenance. Their lives run like a clock in many respects, and it is because of this. So while you are working on getting yourself out of your mess, remind yourself that you are not working alone.

Practicing anything is a bit frustrating. Anyone who has learned a musical instrument knows this, but we also know that with practice we get better, and soon it becomes easy, even enjoyable. While I am not about to say that washing your kitchen floor will ever be fun, I will say, with confidence,



that having the time to enjoy life is. The feeling you get from living with order is joyful. The actual work may not be, but surely living a life that is well ordered and thereby giving us time to enjoy it is. If you are living in a mess, you might still be doing fun things, but it is at the expense of your peace. Most likely, though,

you are not able to do most of the things you want to do. Spinning your wheels is a good way to describe your house cleaning routines. You are always cleaning, but nothing actually gets done. Realizing that things need to change is important, but implementing a plan to make things change is when transformation happens.

CHAPTER 11

Forever Spontaneous, Lighthearted, Optimistic, and Beloved

Step 10 – Continue to apply what is learned, by remembering the no excuse rule, and understanding that our nature will always remain the same.



I cannot emphasize enough the importance in continuing; staying the course and not becoming complacent. While I did spend a lot of time writing about letting go of the past, there are some things that should not be forgotten: the pain and the difficult existence felt and lived when we were unorganized. You will find that after you begin working your program, life becomes just lovely. You must remember that you are how you are because of who you are. Just as the alcoholic knows that one drink is too many and a thousand is not enough, we must know that leaving one half eaten bowl of ice cream on the end table soon becomes a mountain of stuff! Compromise breeds compromise.



The human species seems well able to forget pain, not necessarily the experience that brought about the pain, but the actual pain. I suppose this is necessary, for who would ever again have a child if the pain of labor could be recalled. Why do women (and men) go back into an abusive relationship, when they know how difficult it was to live in it and how hard it was to finally leave it? Pain diminishes with time, an easier more pleasant version of life appears, and we remember a different reality. When life becomes easier and more ordered, our nature will begin to raise its darling head and lie to us. We will think things such as, “The place looks great! Just go to bed, you can get to that in the morning” ...or “What is

wrong with you? Life wasn’t so bad, you don’t have to go crazy and keep up with everything all the time!” ...or “What were you so worried about before you read that book, you were just fine, you don’t have to do that system anymore. You got this!”



It can become easy to rationalize the desire to skip steps, to ignore rules and to “do it later”. If this happens, you will find yourself quickly back into a mess. It doesn’t take long for this to happen, but the good news is, you have the tools, you know the program and you can start again, only this time it would not be a long haul, it will be a much more pleasant journey.

Years ago, my then husband and I lived in Florida with our five children. There was something of importance I learned while living there that I would like to share, which is relevant to this chapter and the 10th step. When we moved, I had been organized for four years. My life had changed drastically using the system described in this book and I did not pull out the 3 x 5 card box with which I used to make it all happen, because so many habits were automatic for me at this point. I felt I didn’t need it any longer.

Living there, for me, was difficult. I was not happy. I moved away from my entire family. I was three months pregnant with child #5 but no one knew it yet. I had four children, ages 12, 10, 8 and 3. We were living in a small house that belonged to my father-in-law (he lived in the same house with us). My marriage was not doing very well, we only had one vehicle, and money was scarce. I saw Pam Young and Peggy Jones on QVC. They were selling their system, revamped. It was different

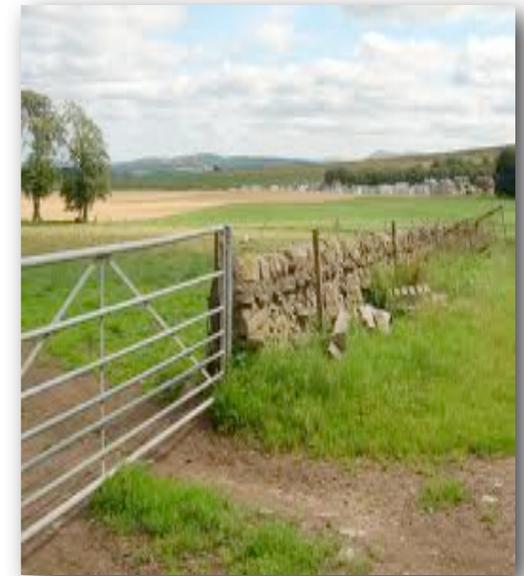
than the one I had made myself via the instructions in their book Sidetracked Home Executives years earlier, so I decided to order it.



One of the things they suggested that was different than their previous system was a 'rate your day' divider in the 3x5 card box. The rating of 1

was to be viewed as you were strapped to the blades of a food processor and 10 was like you won the lottery, 5 was as if you were the drapes in a Motel 6 - just hanging there. Well, when the kit arrived, I put it together and began immediately. At once, I noticed that implementing a new system had an effect on my mood. I was happier. The first day was rated at 1, soon it jumped to 3, and before you knew it I was documenting 7 and 8's. What had changed? I was still living in the same small space, with the same four children, with the same husband. We were still broke and I was still secretly pregnant

with child #5 (the reason for the secrecy was a sense of embarrassment for me. We were having a hard enough time providing for the four children we already had, and living in such a small space just made me not want to share the news, even with my husband). So, what was the explanation regarding my increase in day ratings? The answer to that question is "order", but not the kind of order that was in the house, the kind of order that was in my mind. The house did not become more orderly. I had developed enough good habits and routines that where I lived was clean and not cluttered. Here is what I equate it to: our personalities are such that they need boundaries and predictability.



There was a study done to see the effect had on children when the fence surrounding a play area in a park was removed. Some people believed that it would give children more freedom of expression and a less inhibited time of play. Well, the exact opposite occurred. With the fence removed from the park, the children did not stray far from the center of the playground. When the fence was replaced the same children explored every section of the park.

A system, a tangible and visible perimeter of our daily lives' to-dos, helps us to venture out in life, confidently. This system was my fence to the world. Without it, I huddle in the

midst of life, paralyzed by the enormity of it all. With it, I was able to explore, plan, and do. The visible boundary, so to speak, is necessary to not keep us fenced in. A system helps us to see one thing at a time, instead of the entire, often overwhelming, realities of living life.

Understanding how we think, what motivates us, and what we need, is crucial to succeeding in accomplishing ordered lives. In Florida, even though it seemed as if the system I had in place was no longer needed, it actually was. Our character does not change when we get organized; we will still be spontaneous and able to change our Tuesday, Desk Day, for our Thursday, Free Day, if need be. We still need direction, even if things become automatic. For those who are organizationally challenged, even if order has become habitual, the need for boundaries will never diminish. Our nature still is to say YES to everything, we will always think with the right side of our brains, we still will be scattered by nature. Adjust your system as time goes by but do not abandon it. It proves to be an anchor in the sea of our creative lives.

Higher Callings (Or Lets Have Fun!)

Step 11 – We seek to understand ourselves and give time to higher callings as now there is time too.





When I first discovered this system, 23 years ago, I was a procrastinator extraordinaire. I would begin things, but rarely finish them. I would have grand ideas, but never be able to get them off the ground. Amazing things happened when I became organized. Having focus gave me clarity. I went back to school

at age 30, wrote a children's book, went back to school again at 33 (just after beginning the system again, after losing focus and having my 5th child), started two successful businesses, played a lead role in a community theater (something I had always wanted to do), completed a course in homeopathy. I taught myself the guitar, which was something else I had always wanted to do, began writing songs (three can be found on YouTube—Just Get Married, I Want a Man, and The Procrastinator's Song), started performing at open mics. I now teach an adult school course called "Organize your Life," started a business called The Tidy Tutor, and wrote this book. All of these things I never could have done without the 12 Steps for the organizationally challenged. None of the above would have happened without the system that I discovered in Sidetracked Home Executives, and built upon with my own experiences. All may have been started, but none of it would have been realized.

I will give you a clear image of the days when I was organizationally challenged. I lived in absolute chaos most of the time. There were many moments of order, but it was only on the outside. Inside, drawers and closets were a disaster. In the presence of company, looking for scissors or a book would throw the entire house into an embarrassing display of unkemptness.

I could not keep up with laundry; the hampers were overflowing, no path could be found to the washer and dryer, so I needed another spot to hold all the dirty clothes. The bathtub seemed to be a good choice! There was a curtain that closed and covered it, elegantly, or so I thought. Before I could give my children a bath or take a shower, the tub had to be emptied, and then, of course, replaced with the clothing when bath time was over. That is how life went.

I had a dog at the time who would sometimes find it fun to tear apart the garbage and spread it all over the house. If I came across the mess and



had plans to go out, I would just step over it for the time being, figuring it would still be there when I got back. Showering and dressing were only for going out of the house! My family and I were always groomed, cleaned, and pressed while out in public, but at home? It was pajamas and playtime! I had so many unfinished projects that I began putting them in paper bags, writing what they were on them, and storing them

away. It would take days to prepare for company. The day before and the day of were filled with cramming items in places that they didn't belong (known to the avid S.L.O.B. as stash and dash) because no more time could be spent doing it properly.

When I had company, I never allowed guests to help out in the kitchen, because I could have claimed the fuzzy life forms that started setting up shop in my refrigerator as dependents. I would often try to recruit my young tribe to snap the house into shape. I thought they were able-bodied at 5, 3 and 1. I figured we could work together and make something happen. I would have Katie empty drawers making piles of clothing as per season (all four seasons were in there). Georgie would be recruited to take all the things out of the closets, so that I could organize them. Mikie would be in charge of toys, picking them up, and putting them in the appropriate wicker baskets. At one point—it never failed—I would realize that we pulled out more than we could put back, and I always stood in awe at what a mess I made, in order to clean up a mess. Of course, the sidetracked fun-loving side of me, would start playing a game we came across, or reading a book we found, abandoning our purpose until it got too late to continue. We simply went to sleep amongst all the disarray.

Then there was the substitution game. The substitution



game is what you do because you have procrastinated for so long regarding something, that there is no time to get what is needed, or to do what needs to be done correctly. For example: I knew it was time to change the wiper blades on the car, but it hadn't rained in so long, I'll get to it! It doesn't take a genius to realize that, um... it is going to rain someday... Here comes the rain! Well, I think... the wipers work, but not so good, what do I do? I cut a potato in half and rub it on the windshield! Yes! Did you know that makes the water sheet off the glass, and not bead up? It works while I'm on my way to get the blades, of course being late for wherever it was I needed to be. Here is another classic example: Halloween! We all know it's coming, it is not a surprise event put on the calendar last minute! But, time has a way of creeping up on the organizationally-challenged, so Emily (the 7 year old little angel of a girl) is, last minute transformed into, Yukon Cornelius (the gold miner from Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer)! A pair of jeans, an over-sized flannel shirt, an axe we had laying around from our visit to Medieval Times, a beard found in the "Halloween Box," and a skull cap, VIOLA! Yukon Cornelius! After a while, she just told people she was a lumberjack, too tired of explaining who Yukon was. We thought everyone knew Yukon! Apparently, they didn't.

Some things never change. I still play the substitution game, but not for the same reason. I do so not because I have waited too long, or haven't scheduled things properly into my day, but because I have an imagination and I have been practiced at making things work. My kids call me MacGyver. I can

make something happen with nothing but some string and duct tape. Like the time my bumper fell off because I drove too close to a concrete curb in a parking lot. I had to hold it on with something until I got home, so some floral wire that was in the back seat, the hair tie off my head, and my ever-present silver duct tape, did the trick! Just as Step 10 dictates, our natures will remain the same.

Back in my organizationally challenged days, I never had what I needed in the house. Always putting things off will do that, you know. Band-Aids were often tape with a piece of napkin folded in a tiny square. We used fabric softener as hair conditioner and visa versa (don't try either, your hair ends up looking like a dandelion gone to seed, and your clothes get greasy-looking spots on them!). I have put small items of clothing in the microwave to dry (don't do that either—rubber melts in there). I have swept my carpets with a broom, emptied vacuum cleaner bags out (this will give you a rash on your arm that itches like crazy and a trip to the emergency room because you couldn't breathe from all the dust flying around). While we still sometimes have breakfast for dinner, we do it because it is our choice, not because it is the only food item in the house.

There will come a certain point, after you implement the new habits and education in becoming organized, that you will have time for higher endeavors. You will stop merely surviving, and actually start living. When this happens, I hope you will write to me. The things you have always been putting off, because there just was no time to do them, will begin to mate-

rialize. You will schedule those things into your week and life becomes sweet. Play the piano, go back to school, write that book, read The Bible, meditate, learn to crochet, quilt, paint, golf, start a business, travel. Living life only doing the “have to-s” is not a way to live. Having time for the “want to-s”? Now, that's living!

Session Four - Week four

Here are all of the habits that I suggested you memorize.

I RECOMMEND THAT YOU REFERENCE THESE FOR A WHILE.
KEEP THEM ON YOUR FRIDGE AS LONG AS YOU NEED AND TAPED
INSIDE YOUR BINDER FOREVER.

1. Do it now! Not later.
2. Think about tomorrow today.
3. Get up a half hour before you need to.
4. Shower, dress, and groom before anything.
5. Say “no”!
6. Write everything Down!
7. Close cabinets, cupboards, and drawers.
8. If it leaves your hand, it is where it belongs.
9. Don't pass it up, pick it up.
10. Slow down and hurry up.
11. Eat sitting down.
12. Go to bed on time.

We are going to incorporate a higher power into our day. In any 12 Step program it is evident that until a higher power is acknowledged, things do not work as well. This is a fact and not debatable.



You, of course, can choose to take this out altogether. That is your privilege. I believe it is important in succeeding, and so, here it is.

The section below, including *G.I.F.T.* - to the “*Rate Your Day*” example on page 69, is something I learned from Pam Young and Peggy Jones. More details about the lessons I learned during that time are on page 62 in Chapter 11. If you skimmed past those pages, I strongly suggest going back to that chapter.

G.I.F.T. - G. God, I. Imagination, F. Focus, and T. Thanksgiving.* These are the last things you think about before bed and the first things you think about when you wake up.

God: Acknowledge God or a higher power. Put yourself in his hands and remind yourself throughout the day when anything stresses you, that you already gave it all to God, and you do not wish to take any of it back. Trust that all is well.

Imagination: Think about what you want your day to be like, your life, your week, your year. Imagine good things over and over again. Here are books that proclaim the power of

thought: Think and Grow Rich, As A Man Thinketh, The Holy Bible, The Master Key, Quantum Physics.

Remember in Chapter 8 where we spoke about the pathways in the brain which widen with attention and become our basis for the acceptance of truth? Well, doing this exercise is a great start to beginning new pathways, while ignoring the old less productive ones that do not serve us, but rather hinder us from moving forward in direction in which we wish to go.

A great place to start is to take notice of negative things that we think or say to ourselves on a regular basis. Now make a deliberate contradiction, if you are always thinking, “I will never be successful,” “I will never have any money,” and “I never get what I want,” then write on a 3x5 card, “I am successful,” “I am wealthy,” “I have more than I need and want.” Suze Orman suggests this very thing in her book Nine Steps



for Financial Freedom. You will be surprised at how quickly your attitude changes. But remember, those old thoughts and beliefs are deep-rooted. It will take persistence to completely obliterate those patterns. Don't stop when you begin to feel better,

or begin to believe your new thoughts. You must put time into it, realizing the amount of time that was put into the lies you believed.

Focus: Here you will think about the focus for your day. Is it a Free Day? What will you do with it? Is it a Desk Day? Prepare in your mind the time you will take and what you wish to accomplish at your desk for this particular day. Is it a Family Day? What would you like to do with the family?



Whom do you want to include? Is it an errand day? Remember your planner from the night before and think about your to-dos so as to utilize your time most wisely. You get the point.

Thanksgiving: Be Thankful! Think of things you have to be thankful for. If you cannot think of anything, and you are breathing, start there.



Label a blank divider with the word “Journal”. This is optional, but I do suggest doing this for at least the first month. Write the date (don't forget the year) on the top right corner, then write something about the day,

a highlight, a feeling, a thought, something. Then rate your day (if all you do is rate your day that is OK, too). Ten is as if you won the lottery, and one is like you are strapped to the blades of a food processor, five is like the drapes in the living room-- you are just hanging there. If your days right now are 1-3, in the first few days/week, it probably won't change much, but all of a sudden it will change, as you progress in your new ordered life style. Most days will be 5s and 6s. Later, you will find there will be 8s and 9s and even an occasional 10. Trust me, it will happen.

The reason it is optional is because it is not a necessary component to becoming organized, which is the primary purpose of this book. As you have seen, there are many connections that contribute to succeeding, achieving, and continuing on in your endeavors to live an ordered life. That is why I believe it is imperative to rate your day so you can track progress that cannot be seen with the human eye. By rating your days, you will see clearly that life is chang-

ing. This is important for two reasons. You can feel progress even if you can't yet see it with your eyes, (see chapter 10), and you will be able to look back when (and there will be a when) you begin to minimize your progress.



Example of a rate your day/journal entry of mine:

Journal - 8/8/13

Day Rate 8

Went down to the shore, day 4 (yesterday). Beach most of the day. Roberta and her kids came down

Em stayed home in the evening

I went to happy hour with Susan

Friend from high school, Annette, met me there with her husband, will send a proposal to teach a class for her clients.

Danced to the band.

Maria and Nick are coming down today and Friday.

Getting the family involved: It does not work to tell them to make their bed when you are still in yours. You have got to walk the walk to get the family on board. When they begin to see progress, they will like the trend and want things to change. Be consistent. I'll bet that you have tried things before and were not very successful at it. I'll bet that you started things before and have not continued, so don't be upset if they do not jump on board as soon as you would like. Just continue to be persistent, expecting help, delegating, telling them what their jobs are. You must employ the tagging game. (See Chapter 7) They will respond.

Be innovative. Here is my 17 year-old's routine. It is only one page in a page protector on the refrigerator and in her bedroom inside her closet door.

Morning

Make bed * Shower * Bathroom Swish * Dress * Hair
Face * Pick up room * Chores * Vitamins

A job on the fridge (I put the present detail cleaning list on the fridge for those in my household and I delegate who gets what job)

After School Routine

Drink water/sit down for 5 minutes * Start homework
Help with dinner * Tell mommy what I need for tomorrow

Evening Routine

Eat * Help clean up dinner * Finish up homework
Laundry - Monday * Saturday * Sunday
Think about tomorrow - Put things by the door
Clothes ready for tomorrow
Wash face * PJs * Clean up after myself * Bed on time

When my children were small, I laminated 3x5 cards and hole-punched them and strung them together with yarn and hung it on their bedroom wall. For the little ones, we cut out pictures from magazines together. A picture of someone brushing their teeth, getting their PJ's on, making their bed, etc. Daytime was represented by a drawing of a full sun on



the right-hand corner, afternoon was a half-sun, evening was a crescent moon.

There are particular things that get done every single day. You know what has to be done now. If you do not live alone, there are

things that can be assigned to each person, you should not have to do it all, but someone has to manage it, and that will be you.

All people that live in the house need to be responsible for the house they live in. Below are examples of daily routine to-dos that can be given to family members. What I like to do is print out this week's detailed zone list and put it on the fridge. I tell my children which job they are responsible for that particular week. If it is only two of you, just divide them up. Say, "You take 6 and I'll take 6." I tried at first to give them a choice, to pick what job they wanted to do. That didn't work out well, they need to be told, "Do this!" They prefer to just be told. That has been my experience.

Daily: Bathroom swish. Shake throw rugs. Take out garbage. Put away dishes. Put clothes in dryer. Complete a zone job or two.

Dinner time: Set Table. Clear table. Do dishes. Sweep floor.

Before Bed: Clothes in washer. Start dishwasher/do dishes. Complete a zone job or two.

There are also things that need to be done weekly, such as: Bring garbage out front, bring out recycling, particular jobs on “Slip Shod Cleaning Day” and “Family Work Day”.

Some things to keep in mind on your Desk Day: Check supplies needed for your desk. Write what supplies (stamps, envelopes, etc) you will need on the date of Errand Day.

It is also a good idea to take some time to make a menu plan on your Desk Day. There is a download available on my site for the menu plan page. Write down meal choices and snacks that are usual for your family as well as eating out and “take out” favorites. Include in your grocery list all the ingredients needed to make the meals planned as well as snacks, drinks, and refreshments for company. Take note of non-food items you are low on, such as plastic wrap, cleaning supplies, and laundry detergent, etc.

Papers: *Before you begin reading this section, I strongly encourage you to visit my website to watch a video including a detailed explanation. It will make your life a lot easier!*

It doesn't matter the amount of papers you have piled up, you tackle it all the same. If you don't already have a filing system, make one. De-junking your present filing system is something that you will include in your zone work on your Desk Day. If you are looking for something to use as a filing system and you know that you are more of a visual person, then a

crate-like hanging file folder system will work great for you. Otherwise, you can use a filing cabinet, a file box, anything that you have.



Things you will need: A large (decorative) storage box and a (decorative) cardboard picture storage box from a craft store. Inside the storage box you will place: 12 letter-

sized envelopes labeled Jan to Dec (along with the current year), a bunch of blank envelopes, a plastic Ziploc bag in which you will place stamps, a pen, address labels. You will also need blank envelopes, a calculator, your checkbook, and registry if you do not carry it with you.

Put the bills and mail you need to address in the large box as it arrives. When you open your mail, do it over the garbage/recycling. Recycle fillers.

When you come across a piece of mail that needs your attention, put it in the cardboard picture storage box. All of your bank statements will also go in that box.



After you pay a bill place the stub into this month's envelope. Write the check number, date, and amount paid (if you called it in or paid it online, you will write that on the stub along with the confirmation number).



All of your pay stubs will go in the appropriate month's envelopes. For items that you may have to find such as receipts, do not put them in an envelope of the month, the odds of you remembering what month you purchased something, or paid a ticket, is not likely, so you want to make particular envelopes for those things, or make a file in your larger filing cabinet/crate. When you work on your Desk Day, your binder will always be at hand. As you write out a bill or address anything, you will write down all its information on a white 3x5 card and place it in front of the appropriate letter in the A-Z dividers. Include: name of establishment, phone number, address, and website, your account number, and any online information you may have, such as screen name and password.

Write in your planner "Check Dates To Remember" on your Desk Day during the second week of every month. When that day comes, look at your "Dates to Remember" page. In your planner, on your next Errand Day, make a list of what you are to pick up including any cards or gifts. Write a note in your planner when they are to be mailed or given. After cards are purchased, put them in the picture storage box you have made up to hold all of your Desk Day items. Also, if you are in the

habit of calling people to wish them a happy birthday, write "Maria's Birthday, call her!" on the appropriate day.



You will make it a habit to look at your monthly planner to see if there are any appointments where you know that you will be in a position of waiting. Plan to bring things with you on appointments and on any meeting times. If you have children who participate in any events in which you will be a spectator, prepare yourself with things to do during these times also, as there are often many minutes of waiting before, after, and during such events. You will: answer invitations, fill out cards, address envelopes, balance checkbook, and pay bills. Fill in the small blocks of time with productivity. When you know you will be in a position of waiting, it is a good time and place to clean out your purse and/or wallet, as well.

Storage: By now you have boxes with a hodgepodge of stuff in them in an area of your house where you have deemed to be your storage area, or in several areas, depending on your space. The boxes you have been collecting come into play now. Have a few open and ready to receive contents. Keep your binder on hand and label a divider "Storage." Give a name for each box. For example: Mikie's Size 5 Winter Clothes would be, M1. If there is another box for Mikie's size 5 winter clothing then you will call that M2. With a thick

magic marker, write the name of that particular box on it. On a piece of loose-leaf paper, write on the top left-side: Mikie's Size 5 Winter Clothes and whatever that box is labeled. As you place each item into that box you write what it is onto the page you have just created. At the top right corner of that paper you also note where the box is located: Right back corner of attic.

You do this with every item in your storage area. Working on this one hour a day is what I recommend. From then on, any item that is added or taken away from the storage area will be noted on the page in which it is written in your binder.

M1 - Mikie's Size 5 Winter Clothes

Right Corner of Attic

1. Black winter coat
2. Black leggings
3. 4 turtlenecks (2 red, green, white)
4. Green feetie pj's
5. Grey hoodie

Creative Givers

Step 12 – Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we carry this message to other slobbs, and practice these principles in all our affairs



From 1998 to 2003 I was a member of a church in NYC right across the street from the World Trade Center, called Faith Exchange Fellowship. It was the kind of church that hoped to make a difference in the lives of their parishioners and also in the lives of people outside of the church. A group formed called “The Discipleship Group”, which was more than a group, it was taught like a course. There were books that we had to buy and read; there was a plan for body, soul, and spirit. We were to be disciplined as Jesus and his disciples were. It was challenging, for sure, but I was up for it. Our schedule consisted of fasting one day a week, committing to reading the Bible, daily prayer, walking a few miles each morning, and community service. We also lead certain group functions, assigned to us by the pastor, and were placed on teams with a leader.

After a few months of holding these functions, we received a reprimanding email from the pastor about how we were dropping the ball and not sticking to our commitments. I immediately responded to his email, having the understanding of the type of individuals who signed up for this monumental commitment.

I explained to the pastor that we are people who are like lightning, very willing and able to rise up to the tasks at hand, but with



no inner direction. We just didn't know how to proceed. It may have seemed like we were slackers in many ways, waiting for the last minute for everything, but we certainly were not. We were more than willing to get our hands dirty and to burn the midnight oil, while waking up early, as well, but we did more interacting than acting. We had what it took to get out there, but not what it took to be productively functioning when we got out there.

I pleaded for mercy and a sense of understanding from our pastor, who was an organized and driven person, and simply could not relate. I asked him to see us in a different, more compassionate light. I told him that most, if not all, of the people who do the volunteer work were those who were organizationally challenged. I'm not talking about the delegators, but those who get down and dirty. The people who show up early to set up, who do most of the creative events, such as run the choir, children's church, the parties, lunches, and dinners.

This pastor listened. He changed his attitude toward those he was scolding and all of those who fell short in his volunteer groups. He recognized that we all do not have the same gifts



and talents. That we need to be celebrated for the gifts that we did have, and that we needed understanding and maybe a little more broken down instruction. This, I think, is an important message to get out to the world. Perhaps someday, people will not see slob as unmotivated or lazy people, but as creative givers, without whom, nothing would ever get done.

You can far surpass the organizationally gifted family member who always had those off-the-cuff comments about your car, home, and life management skills. I played the piano at four years old, without instruction, with two hands, chords and all. I never took lessons or pursued the innate ability within me, and so, there it is, an elementary level at best. Yet, the person who had no innate ability is in Carnegie Hall, or on the floor in the Met, playing his heart out and getting paid very well for it. I, on the other hand, may be on the floor of the Met, but I would be sweeping up, not playing.



It goes back to the foundation of our journey. We are not organizationally challenged because we are lazy or unmotivated. Organization is a learned skill. Everyone is not born musical. Everyone is not born organized. When I wanted to play the guitar, I called my brother John in Florida, and I asked him

what to do. He told me to print out a song without bar chords, “Pick a Bob Dylan or a Beatles song, and play it every day.” He said, “You will get better.”

That is what I am telling you here—practice every day, you will get better. You would not get mad at yourself the first day, week, or even month, that you pick up your guitar and cannot hit every note perfectly. You would just keep playing. Keep playing, practicing, and working the system. You will get better... even great. I promise.